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[PRICE ONE PENNY.]



[DESPITE HER APPEARANCE, BOTH KENNETH AND MARTIN FELT THAT THE NEW COMER WAS A LADY!]

A BEAUTIFUL CLAIMANT.

PROLOGUE.

SOUTH AFRICA, some four years back, when what is to-day an important city, was but a handful of canvas tents, an encampment of the first gold-seekers, lured thither by the rumour that fortunes were to be made in no time, and that in that wild, irregular way of life no passport of respectability, no certificate of honesty, was required.

It was night. The tents, or huts as they were often called, looked picturesque by the red, lurid glow of the lamps; and two Englishmen, who were taking a stroll before turning in for the night, paused a moment in admiration of the strange, weird look of the encampment.

Both of them were strangers to the place. One had come out to Africa to see his relations in Cape Town, the other had accompanied him for the sake of the voyage. They had come on the hundreds of miles after the railway ceased, because they wanted to have a

look at the city of the future; but neither of them had any intention of trying his luck at the mines.

Both were in easy, if not affluent, circumstances.

Vere Thornton was the only son of a country Squire, of whom nothing was expected but an interest in the property one day to be his own; and Kenneth Martin had been called to the Bar, and allowed himself this four months' pleasure trip in Africa before settling down to the rather monotonous career of waiting for briefs.

He had a small private income, and increased it by literature.

Kenneth would probably never make a great writer; but short stories, and terse, vigorous articles came readily from his pen, and he hoped to take back many fresh "ideas" for future use from this southern trip.

They were only going to stay two or three days at the gold-fields. Vere declared that the heat and dust were intolerable, while the people made him ashamed of his country. This last was an extreme view; but, in truth, among the motley crowd gathered at Baasfont-

tein, most of the Englishmen did look desperately down on their luck—as though, indeed, they had reached such a pitch of misfortune that they could not sink much lower.

To these it was evident the gold-diggings had been a last resource; and if fortune did not favour them it was terrible to think of their next step.

"It's nothing but gambling," said Mr. Thornton, a little severely to his friend. "They spend the last shilling they can scrape together in the attempt to get here, and obtain a 'claim,' as they call it. Then, if there's no gold on it they're ruined. Upon my word, Martin, I don't see much difference between a gold-claim and a lottery-ticket; and the last a man would enjoy in comfort without waiting his fate among such surroundings."

"Hush!" said Martin, simply, "there's someone coming. I think it's a lady!"

He was right. Despite the strangeness of the time and scene—not far from midnight—alone beyond the bounds of the little canvas town, despite her plain calico dress, bare head, and lonely appearance, both men felt instinctively that the new comer was a lady.

Martin raised his hat as though she had been a princess, and addressed her with what he thought must be reassuring information.

"You are close to the settlement," he said, kindly. "You will see the light of the lamps in a moment if you have lost your way."

She shook her head.

"I am not going back to the camp, thank you. I am looking for the doctor. He must pass this point on his way back to his hut."

"If you will intrust us with a message we will give it him," said Kenneth, eagerly, for he could not bear the thought of that girl standing alone at midnight in such a spot.

"But would you know him?"

"I do not think we could mistake," said Mr. Thornton, joining in the conversation for the first time. "You see there will not be many people passing at this hour."

"And he rides a white horse!" said the girl, simply. "If you would watch for him, and tell him my brother is worse, I should be so thankful."

"We will give the message," Kenneth assured her; "but it would be better for us to know the patient's name. You see the doctor might not understand who required him!"

"I forgot. Please tell him that Jack Bovington is worse. We think he is dying, and we cannot keep him quiet."

The moon fell on her face as she spoke, and both men felt a thrill of pity. She looked young—barely eighteen; and, despite the roughness and freedom of swamp life, she seemed to have retained all the modest dignity of early girlhood.

Her complexion was clear and colourless, her hair a beautiful shade of chestnut-brown, while her large eyes resembled in colour and softness a purple heartstone.

"You may trust us," said Kenneth, warmly. "But will you not let my friend see you safely back to your hut while I wait here for the doctor?"

"Oh, no," said the girl, quickly, "they would not like it;" and then, as though fearing her words had been misinterpreted, she turned to Vere with a wistful smile. "You see, my brother is so afraid of strangers when the delirium is on him."

She passed away as suddenly as she had come, but the current of the friend's thoughts was changed.

"What a shame to bring a girl like that to this beastly sort of life!" said Vere, crossly.

"I don't know. Perhaps she and her brother are alone in the world, and she preferred coming with him to being left behind. Poor fellow! I suppose he has the camp fever, as they call it."

"More likely the fever that comes from too much brandy. Most probably he is in delirium tremens. It sounded like it."

They had not to wait long for the doctor, whose white horse bore him so quickly by that they had much ado to attract his notice. He proved to be a middle-aged Scotchman, well seasoned to all kinds of climate and society, but yet with a fond of kindly feeling no amount of globe trotting seemed to have exhausted.

"Jack Bovington," he repeated, with a sigh. "Thank you, gentlemen. I'll go round directly for the sake of the little lass; but it's little good doctor or medicine can do her brother. A sad case as ever I saw. A young fellow with everything about him to attract people, and yet his life wrecked by one curse."

"Meaning drink?" said Vere, thoughtfully.

The doctor nodded.

"He's been going the pace for three years, ever since his father died. If he hadn't had a splendid constitution to start with he'd have done for himself long ago."

"Bovington," repeated Kenneth, thoughtfully, when the doctor had galloped off. "I am sure I have heard that name before."

"Which you were in our part of the world, I expect. Bovington Manor is the ghostly place

of the neighbourhood, and Miss Bovington the pet topic of conversation."

"Why? Is she mad, beautiful, or a flirt?"

"She may have been the two last half a century ago; but she has never been mad. She is one of the cleverest women I ever met. My father swears by her, and likes to consult her on everything connected with his estate."

"Then why is she the topic of general conversation?"

"Because she is enormously rich; and as she is turned eighty, people suppose she can't keep her money herself much longer, and take an extreme interest in speculating what she will do with it."

"I suppose she has a board of hungry nephews and nieces?"

"On the contrary, she was an only child. The story runs that about sixty years ago she was engaged to her first cousin, and that when the parents broke off the match she refused to think of matrimony again."

"Then the happy first cousin will be the lucky man."

"He must be dead and buried years ago. He would be ninety turned if he were alive. Come, Kenneth, if we are to have any night at all we had better go back to the Hotel, as they call our riotous abode."

And so they dismissed the subject of the Bovingtons from their minds, and spoke no more of the girl who had appeared so suddenly in the moonlight.

Perhaps each had a secret motive for the silence. Her beauty had impressed them far more than they would have acknowledged.

Kenneth prized her intensely, because he felt she loved the scapegraced brother she was so soon to lose, and all Vere Thornton's English prejudices were aroused at the thought of her lonely position.

But though they both thought of her in secret, neither guessed the circumstances under which they were to meet her again, nor the strange, subtle thread that was to interweave her life with theirs.

CHAPTER I.

BOVINGTON MANOR was not ten miles from The Sycamore, as Mr. Thornton's place was called. Indeed, by the short cut across the field, the distance was little more than five; and often had the robust, hearty Squire walked over to lunch with his neighbour, to consult her about some favourite horse or some choice specimen of poultry, just introduced into his home farm—for Miss Bovington took the warmest interest in things agricultural, and her opinion had often more value than that of a practical farmer.

The old maid was a formidable person to most people. Even many of her neighbours looked on her with a little wholesome dread; and the Squire's wife always declared one glance from Miss Bovington's black eyes seemed to petrify her. But Mr. Thornton was honestly fond of his old friend, and put up with her sharp speeches as no one else would do.

Perhaps she seemed a link with his lost youth, for she still treated him as a boy who required to be kept in order, while she was the only person who continued to address the irascible old gentleman as "Jim."

It was about a month after Vere Thornton and his friend had quitted Canvas City, and the young men were on their way to England. The Squire was rejoicing in the news his boy would be home in less than a week when his daughter came dancing into the room, where he sat reading Vere's letter. A pretty light-hearted girl, and a good one, too, was Kitty Thornton, and the pride of both her parents. "Papa!" she exclaimed, excitedly. "Miss Bovington has sent over. She wants you to go to the Manor at once. Anthony is awfully mysterious, and won't give me even a hint what has happened."

The Squire rose at once. He had dined with Miss Bovington the day before, and she

had expressly said she should not expect him over again for a week, as she knew he had visitors. Although the richest woman for miles round Rebecca Bovington never gave herself airs. She was abrupt and outspoken, because it was her nature, but she never dreamed of expecting her friends to be always at her beck and call, or upsetting their plans to suit her own convenience. Anthony, the old coachman, who in point of age came between the Squire and his lady, touched his hat respectfully as Mr. Thornton appeared.

"Beg pardon, sir, but the mistress sent her regards, and begged you'd come over at once."

Evidently Miss Bovington had calculated on her friend's compliance. Anthony had brought the carriage and pair. The boys were the finest horses for miles round; there was to be no delay in harnessing the Squire's own steed.

"Is there anything the matter, Tony?" demanded Mr. Thornton. "I saw your mistress only yesterday, and she seemed quite well then."

Tony shuddered.

"I can't say nothing, sir," he replied, with a look of terror, which was not lost upon the Squire. "What the mistress wants you to know she'll tell you herself; but it's evil days that are coming to Bovington, and we'll all be surprised before we are many weeks older."

The Squire's first impression was that the old man had been drinking. Kitty, wheeled at her father's elbow, was more merciful in her verdict. She felt sure Anthony had received a terrible fright.

"Papa," she whispered to the Squire, "do go with him. I am sure there is something the matter at the Manor!"

"If there is, that fellow Duncan is at the bottom of it," said the Squire irritably. "I wish his evil face had never been seen in Yorkshire."

The Squire got into the carriage and drove off just as he was, in his shooting jacket and easy slippers. He said afterwards he was so taken aback he never thought of anything but getting to Bovington.

Rebecca Bovington was eighty-four, and in more ways than one the marvel of the parish. She had never been known to all anything, summer or winter. Heat or cold seemed to have no effect on her; and but for the arthritis suffering from occasional disorders, the Manor would have been a dead loss to the village doctor.

The old maid refused to have a companion, declaring she preferred solitude to purchased society. Though intensely hospitable, and delighting to invite her friends to lunch or dinner, nothing would induce her to have any guests staying in the house. Bovington Manor could have accommodated thirty visitors easily, so the number of rooms given over to seclusion and disuse may be guessed.

There was nothing miserly or penurious about Miss Rebecca. She lived in the same state as her father had done. A butler and footman presided over her meals. A groom and coachman attended to her stables, an army of gardeners made the grounds a marvel of beauty, and quite a dozen female servants were under the orders of the dignified housekeeper; but all the servants, male and female, with one exception, slept in the left wing. Miss Bovington and her maid alone occupied the main building; and, as the Squire had pointed out to her a dozen times, she and Elizabeth were as utterly at the mercy of burglars as though the army of domesticity had not been in the other part of the house.

Rebecca Bovington refused to change her habits. She had no enemies, she declared, who would seek to murder her.

The plate and all portable valuables were safe in the butler's charge; and she did not think so badly of human nature as to believe thieves would try to frighten a helpless old woman, who had never injured anyone in her life. Besides, she continued, for over thirty years she and Elizabeth had been as much unprotected as they were now, and if harm

was going to come to them it would have arrived long ago.

As the lady of the Manor was noted for her obstinacy, her friends yielded the point.

Miss Bovington and Elizabeth continued (as Mrs. Thornton phrased it) to defy Providence, and so far they had escaped any unpleasant consequences.

The Squire found himself thinking a great deal of his old friend's caprice as he was borne swiftly towards the Manor.

He had for Rebecca Bovington almost a brotherly affection, and he did not hide from himself that when anything happened to his old neighbour it would be like losing a dear relation.

She was eighty-four, but then she seemed younger in her habits than many a woman of sixty. Still she had passed the usual limits of human life, and he could hardly hope for her to see many more years.

For the first time the Squire asked himself the question which had long occupied the minds of the neighbourhood in general—who would be Rebecca Bovington's heir?

The Squire was in easy circumstances himself, but his wealth was as nothing compared to that of his old friend had to dispose of.

The Bovingtons had been in Yorkshire for centuries, and, like many old families, they had gone on steadily getting richer. It was the habit of the race to marry heiresses; and though there was no entail on the property it had been the invariable custom to leave nearly everything to the eldest son.

Sydney Bovington, Rebecca's father, had come into a clear thirty thousand a year, and, besides the Manor, a small estate in Staffordshire, in which coal had recently been found; so that for years Rebecca had been growing richer and richer, until even an intimate friend like the Squire could form no exact idea of her fortune.

She had been engaged to her cousin Arthur, a delicate, studious youth, and the parents had broken off the match on account of the bad health of the intended bridegroom.

He had gone to Australia in a fit of pique, accompanied by his only brother, to whom he was much attached.

Their father, Walter Bovington, died soon after, and his little property was, at the brothers' desire, transferred to them in Melbourne.

From that day to this nothing had been heard of the young men. They were both Rebecca's heirs, so probably ere this they had both gone over to the great majority.

"If she left no will their children would have the money equally; and Arthur's son—supposing he had one—inherits all the land, I suppose," said the Squire to himself, thoughtfully; "but there will be no end of complications. It would be far better if she disposed of her property herself, though I hope she will be spared for many a long day."

Mr. Duncan was standing on the terrace steps when the Squire drove up—a suave, shrewd, clear-headed man of business.

Most people had thought it an excellent thing when he obtained the post of Miss Bovington's agent about a year ago.

He managed her affairs creditably, kept his place, and never presumed; but from the first moment of his coming to Bovington the Squire detected him.

"Give me one thing or the other," he said, irritably, to Miss Rebecca. "Either have a servant whom you can order about, or an equal whom you can treat as a friend. This fellow Duncan is neither. He is not a gentleman; but he considers himself one."

"Gentlemen get rarer every year, Jim!" retorted the old maid. "He's an excellent man of business and highly recommended."

"He's a designing scoundrel!" returned the Squire, "and you'll regret the day you saw him. See if you don't!"

Perhaps, to prove her independence, and show her old friend she did not take his opinion in all things, Miss Rebecca professed herself very well satisfied with Mr. Duncan.

She patronised him, having even asked him to lunch with her.

The Squire shrugged his shoulders for a time, and said nothing; but when reports of the agent's growing influence reached him he grew furious, and said to his wife,—

"She's perfectly infatuated. I shouldn't wonder if she ended in marrying him."

But Mrs. Thornton, though she did not care for Miss Rebecca as her husband did, would not listen to this disparagement.

"Miss Bovington is not in her dotage, James. Depend upon it she has only taken up this man because you warned her against him. You know she is obstinate."

"I suppose you have spoken to the fellow?" growled the Squire. "I took good care not to allow her to introduce him to me."

"I have never met him," replied Mrs. Thornton. "He came in to lunch on Thursday, when Kitty was spending the day at the Manor."

"Then if Kitty had had any self-respect, she would have put down her knife and fork and walked home."

"I was too hungry, dear," put in his daughter, coaxingly. "Besides, you are always exhorting me to be attentive to Miss Bovington!"

"Hem! What was he like, child?"

"Well, he ate and drank much like other civilised people; but I should be sorry to see too much of him, and so I told Miss Bovington afterwards!"

"Really, Kitty, you are getting quite sharp. Of course, she asked you why?"

"Yes. I told her I did not know."

"Kitty!"

"Well, papa, I don't. At first I thought it was his eyes, they look so piercing; then afterwards I fancied it was his mouth, his smile is so cruel and calculating."

"And you told Miss Rebecca so?"

"Yes. She did not like it, but she owned he had a very peculiar face. I think he must admire her very much; he never took his eyes off her."

Mr. Thornton recalled all this as he alighted from the brougham, and saw the agent waiting on the terrace steps. The man came up to him with an air of well-assumed humility.

"I am afraid there is some mistake, Squire! Miss Bovington herself appointed twelve o'clock this morning to sign some leases, but the servant informs me she is engaged."

Squire Thornton made no manner of answer. A choleric and deeply prejudiced old gentleman, he had steadily refused to allow Mr. Duncan to be presented to him, and he was annoyed at the agent's speaking thus unceremoniously. He rang a peal at the hall door, which was instantly opened by the butler, a staid old family servant, who, in common with all Miss Bovington's retainers, fully shared the Squire's prejudices against Andrew Duncan.

"What is that for, Bruce?" asked Mr. Thornton, when, as he entered, the man calmly slipped the brass bolt, and so secured the heavy oaken door against all intruders. Usually it stood open to the hall, where a large fire burned, and whose table was strewn with magazines and newspapers to beguile the passing moments.

"It is Miss Bovington's orders, sir," said Bruce, respectfully. "Has Anthony told you what has happened?"

"He told me nothing," answered the Squire, "but he gave me the impression something was the matter, and I must say this barred door looks like it."

Bruce nodded ominously.

"I had come from the servants' wing this morning, sir, with the plate-chest in my hand. The women were lighting the fires in the breakfast-room and hall, when Tony came round from the stables. You know, sir, he's one of the oldest servants here—he was born on the place, so to say. I saw at once he'd got a fright, so I took him into my pantry and asked what it was. If you'll believe me, sir,

he stands to it that he found a white horse in the stable."

Squire Thornton did not look as much surprised and dismayed as the butler expected. "A white horse!" he said, rather in question than in amazement. "It must have strayed there, I suppose. Miss Bovington never had a white horse. She particularly objects to them."

"Sir," said Bruce, almost in a whisper, "surely being so near a neighbour and such an old friend you know the reason? A white horse means death or ruin to this family."

"Nonsense!" was the Squire's first reply. Then, after a moment's thought, "But I seem to remember something about it. Your mistress will never sit behind a white horse; and I did hear a story of her refusing to put up somebody's carriage because their horses were white."

"That's it, sir. It's the doom of the Bovingtons—a white horse. Has been for centuries. Why, they say the night before the master died he saw a white horse just outside his window waiting to take him away."

"But look here, Bruce. Even if one believed in ghosts, which I don't," said the Squire, bravely, though his teeth chattered ominously, "your theory won't work. If Tony saw a white horse in the stable it was a real dead and blood quadruped! An apparition wouldn't come to warn Miss Bovington's cattle!"

"You've not heard all," said Bruce, in a funeral tone. "Just listen, sir. Tony he's as steady as time, never touched a drop of beer for the last ten years, so he can't have been drunk. He went back two minutes after, and the horse was gone."

"Then it is probably in the grounds making havoc among your mistress's flowers."

Bruce shook his head.

"Tony he shook just like a leaf, sir, when he told me the story; and I was trying to persuade him to take a drop of brandy just to keep his poor teeth from chattering when Miss Bovington's maid came calling for me. I'm sure, sir, I thought the world was coming to an end. We all know Elizabeth's a worthy creature, but she's as stiff and starched as a man's collar. Well, sir, she was shaking just like Tony, and she'd told us, me and him, without asking a single question, that she had seen the white horse. When she drew up the blinds in Miss Bovington's dressing-room it was standing just under the window."

The Squire felt quite unable to combat the butler's superstition any more. He only said, rather restlessly,—

"I hope you have, none of you, told your mistress of this—this fancy?"

"No, sir. We three, Elizabeth, Tony, and me, we made up our minds we'd keep the secret for the credit of the family. But bless me, sir, it wasn't no use. The moment we set eyes on the mistress we felt she'd seen it too."

"And was that why she sent for me?"

"I take it it was, sir," said Bruce, impressively. "When I was clearing away I made bold to remark it was reasonable weather, and would be cheerful for Christmas, which comes in three weeks' time. Miss Bovington, sir, she just shook her head, and said, gravely, 'I shan't be here then, Bruce.' Why, sir, I was so taken aback I nearly dropped the silver. But, of course, I knew then she'd seen the white horse."

Poor Squire Thornton was feeling as though he had seen something supernatural himself, so terribly had the news shaken him. When he reached the pleasant octagon room, where Miss Bovington spent her mornings, he almost dreaded the meeting with his old friend.

To his surprise, Rebecca was not alone. Two gentlemen sat near her. Dr. Bolton, the Vicar of the parish, and Claude Maitland, a rising lawyer.

"I thought you would not fail me, Jim," was the old maid's greeting. "I want to make my will, and I wish you to be one of

the executors. Dr. Bolton has promised to be the other."

The Squire stared.

"Why, Becky, it's very sudden! I was here yesterday, and you never said a word about it. What is the need for haste?"

"Don't ask questions, Jim," said Miss Bovington, sharply. "Mr. Maitland, please read the will aloud to us."

It was very short and simple. The woman whose wealth was so enormous had disposed of her property in very few words. She left handsome legacies to all her servants, kindly remembrances to her closest friends; then Bovington Manor, the coal mine, all her lands, plate, jewels, furniture and money she bequeathed to Mr. Thornton and Dr. Bolton, to hold in trust for the lawful heir of her late cousin, Arthur Bovington. And if it was proved the said Arthur Bovington had left no descendants, then the property was to revert to Vere Thornton, only son of her friend, James Thornton, to have and to hold for ever, on the sole condition that he left it intact to his eldest son, who should take the name of Bovington.

"Not a word," said Rebecca, when the Squire began to protest his boy had no claim on her. "Not a word. If Arthur's son has left no child, there is no one I would rather think of as reigning here than your son."

"You forget," said the Squire, "you have another cousin—Arthur's brother, Charlie."

"Charles Bovington married a Papist," returned the old maid. "I would rather leave the Manor to found an idiot asylum than that he should come in for it!"

The will was signed, Claude Maitland and his clerk attesting it as witnesses. The lawyer carried it off with him. The Vicar departed. The Squire and his old friend were left alone.

"How do you know that Arthur Bovington married?" he asked, abruptly. "I always thought nothing had been heard of him or his brother since their property was realised and sent out to them."

"I let people think so to save my pride, but I knew the truth. Arthur married on the voyage out, and Charles a year later. You need not blame him," she said, angrily, "for I know all about it, and think he acted nobly. She was a young girl, and her father died on the voyage. She would have been homeless and penniless in a strange land, and so Arthur married her when the ship touched at Cape Town. Poor fellow! he said at least if she was his widow he could provide for her future."

"He wrote and told me this. He wrote a year later, and said she had died at the birth of her child, a boy, whom he called Walter, after his father. Do you know what my father did, Jim? He suppressed those letters, and I never saw them till I looked through his papers after his death."

"And then it was too late?"

"And then, though I wrote to Melbourne and made inquiries, I could find no trace of my cousins. They had never taken kindly to colonial life, and had left Australia very soon after the date of Arthur's last letter. You may have to search half through the world, Jim, before you discover if your boy is my heir."

"I hope he isn't," said Jim, stoutly. "But, Becky, Walter Bovington would be an elderly man by this time."

"Sixty-three. I'm glad it's done, the will I mean; it is well off my mind."

"But why in the world were you in such a hurry to make it? You never even mentioned it to me yesterday!"

"I had a fright last night, Jim."

"Why, you don't mean to say you saw it too?" gasped the Squire. "Oh! dear me, what have I said!"

Rebecca Bovington smiled gently; indeed, throughout all the interview her manner had been strangely softened.

"You mean the white horse? Yes, I saw it, Jim, and it always means the same thing

to us Bovingtons—sorrow or death; but that was not the fright I spoke of."

"What was it? You can trust me, Becky."

"Yes," said Miss Bovington, a little grimly, "though I'll have to make a confession I don't much like. But there's nothing petty about you, Jim. You won't go about with a hateful air of triumph, and 'I told you so,' written on your face just because it happens you were right for once."

"What! Have you discovered, something against Duncan?" cried the Squire, with alacrity. "Actually the fellow had the impertinence to tell me there must be something the matter because you refused to see him."

"I never mentioned Duncan, Jim," said Miss Bovington, gently. "Don't let us talk about him. I meant something different. You have often told me it was not safe for Elizabeth and me to sleep so far apart from other people. Well, you were right."

"And you have been robbed! My dear Becky, why didn't you say so before? You know I am a magistrate, and in my judicial capacity I should have set the police to work at once. Now I am afraid much valuable time has been wasted."

"Oh! Jim," reproved Miss Bovington, "you are nothing but a boy at heart, still I can trust you with my story; but remember, I will not let it go any further. I won't be the laughing-stock of the county in my old age. I was very restless last night, and could not sleep. About four some uncontrollable impulse led me to the library to seek a book."

"And you met the thieves?"

"I found lights burning in the library, and someone—don't ask me who, Jim—seated at my davenport searching through all my private papers. Just think of it, Jim! To see the most cherished secrets of my life open to the gaze of—a stranger. Think what I felt at surprising the villain at his task!"

"You ought to have alarmed the house and sent for the police."

"How like a man!" said Miss Rebecca, reprovingly. "A woman has sharper wits, would sending for the police, restore their old sacredness to my poor papers. It would have blazoned my mistake abroad. No, Jim, I waited till he had finished and left the house. Then I went back to the library, and, with my own hands destroyed all the letters I had hoarded for years. I only kept back three. The two I received from my cousin Arthur, telling me of his marriage and his boy's birth, and one, dated twenty years later, from an Australian lawyer, telling me neither Arthur nor Charles Bovington had been seen in Australia since they took passage for England in the steamer *Amazon*. Arthur had his boy with him, and Charles his wife. I will give you these papers, Jim, because they may be of use to you when you have to seek my heir."

"Look here, Becky!" interposed the Squire. "I can see you have had a shock, and been terribly upset. Why not go home with me and stay at The Sycamores for a day or two?"

Miss Bovington shook her head.

"Old trees do not bear transplanting," she said, simply, "and I cannot desert the Manor. If you want to do me a kindness, Jim, you might lend me Kitty, provided her mother can spare her!"

"I'll answer for Lucy," replied the Squire. "Our little maid shall be with you early in the afternoon."

"And, of course," said Rebecca, cheerfully, "I cannot expose your daughter to any risks; so Bruce and one of the footmen will sleep in our corridor, and my midnight intruder will not find entrance such an easy matter again."

"Becky," said the Squire, suddenly. "Just let me say one thing. If it was Duncan you ought to send him away."

Miss Bovington shook her head.

"I shall answer no questions, Jim. If it was Duncan he will be sent away soon enough, for you are the acting exponent to my will,

and I can't fancy your continuing to employ him."

"Nonsense, Becky! I don't believe in ghosts. We shall have you amongst us many years!"

"The token never fails," returned Rebecca. "A riderless white horse appearing to us Bovingtons means death or sorrow. What sorrow could touch a lonely woman like me, with no near ties? No, Jim, depend upon it it means death!"

Kitty Thornton did not refuse her father's request that she would go over to the Manor prepared to spend some days there.

Miss Rebecca had a great fascination for the young girl just entering upon life, and Kitty was by no means averse to the honour of being the first visitor who for more than thirty years had spent a night at the Manor.

She drove over with her maid; for Mrs. Thornton, who was more timid than her daughter, had absolutely refused her consent to the visit unless Pao attended Kitty.

"My dear, they may put you into a damp room, or you may wake in the night and be frightened at the rats! Empty rooms are always haunted by rats. I shall have no peace about you unless Pao is with you."

Miss Rebecca was very pleased to see her guest, and talked so cheerfully at dinner that Kitty quite enjoyed the *triste* the repast. When it was over Miss Bovington said kindly,—

"I generally take a nap in the drawing-room before coffee; but you will find plenty of books and papers in the library, and at eight o'clock I shall expect you to come back to me."

Kitty was so entranced by a new novel she forgot the time; and so it was half-an-hour after eight when she went back to the drawing-room.

Miss Bovington still slept on; and the girl, unwilling to disturb her, sat down in a low chair by the fire, till Bruce, surprised at not hearing the bell for coffee, brought it in un-ordered.

The old servant's eyes saw what had escaped Kitty's. The white horse had not appeared for nothing—Rebecca Bovington was dead!

(To be continued.)

FROM THE FOOTLIGHTS.

CHAPTER VI.—(continued.)

AND so a few days go on, and Netta grows more and more unhappy. She is sure that Bevil has tired of her. On one pretext or another he spends nearly all his time with his cousins. Netta cannot ride, but surely he could teach her if he liked? She cannot play lawn tennis, and it is Millicent who kindly tries to teach her that; but when it comes to play a real match Bevil selfishly chooses to play with practised players, and will not spend his time in helping Netta to spoil the game.

Then another guest comes—a beautiful, high-bred girl, whose face she remembers distinctly—Lady Alexandra des Vaux.

It is in the afternoon. For once, Netta has Bevil all to herself. They have been sitting in the peaceful flower garden amongst the dahlias and the late roses and the strong, sweet mignonette; but with them there has not been peace.

"You seem to care for nothing but running after those girls," Netta has said at the beginning of their conversation. "You treat me as if I was nobody at all."

"You don't understand, Netta," says Bevil, in a muffled tone of exasperated patience. "I cannot devote myself to you in my own house. I must be civil to everybody."

"It seems to me that you are civil to everybody but me."

Bevil frowns. It is marvellous to see what

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a very thunderous frown he can call to his fair, simple face.

Netta does not see it. She is playing with a bit of sweetbriar upon her lap, and if she did see it she has not yet learnt to know her lover well enough to read the signs of his face. She thinks all men are like Jack Collinson, who always was ready to atone for any seeming neglect by a perfectly idiotic amount of devotion as soon as his beloved had deigned to point out his shortcomings.

"I suppose you would like me to kiss you in public as I once saw Arthur Sneyd kiss Miss Carrodus?" he says.

"Arthur Sneyd? When did you see Arthur Sneyd? Late?" asks Netta, turning very white.

"I haven't seen him very lately," says Bevil, carelessly.

"He did not know Blanche when we were at Coldeby," she says, "so it must have been lately."

"Good heavens, Netta, you catch one up like an attorney-general!" says Bevil, impatiently. "What matter can it make when it was? I don't keep a diary of those things."

"It doesn't make any matter," says Netta, trying to speak carelessly, but determined upon finding out when he last saw Arthur Sneyd, and if her meeting with Jack Collinson has been betrayed. That might account for Bevil's coolness towards her. "He hasn't been here. I suppose you met him in London when you came there just before I came here."

"What in the world makes you take such an interest in Sneyd?" asks Bevil, turning his face round to see Netta's all one crimson blaze of guilt.

"I don't take the very least interest in him," Netta cries, her eyes filling with tears. "It was you who began, and I wondered when he had got to know Blanche so well, for he never spoke to her at Coldeby."

"I meant Graham, I suppose, not Sneyd," admits Bevil. "I was thinking about something I heard of Sneyd to day, and I suppose that put his name into my head."

Netta is more frightened than ever when she sees the thunderous frown gather bigger and blacker upon Bevil's brow, but she dares not say more.

"It is too cold to sit here," says Bevil, abruptly. "Come into the house and have some tea!"

They walk across the lawn in gloomy silence, and Bevil enters the drawing-room by the window.

Netta goes round by the door, for she wants to take off her hat and wash her hands, which are soiled by playing with the sweetbriar.

Bevil, going into the soft light—half-twilight, half firelight—of the dressing room, sees that a lady is there, alone with his mother, whom he did not expect to find.

He pauses a moment, and she looks up at him, a faint flush dyeing her cheeks.

"I beg your pardon, Lady Alexandra," he says, coming forward. "I had not the slightest idea you were here!"

"Had not you?" she says, lightly, giving him her hand. "I have come only for two or three days on my way to the Evertons. How warm it is for October!"

"Very," says Bevil, absently; thinking how beautiful she looks, with the firelight touching her bright hair, and the tiny gold studs in her ears, and the plain, gold collar round her throat.

Lady Courtenay is saying something, but he hardly hears her.

"She is going to be Leila Everton's bridesmaid, you know, so we cannot keep her here longer. I was telling you about Lady Alice's engagement, Sandra. Stay, I will fetch her letter, and you shall see everything for yourself. They are all so pleased!"

So Alexandra and Bevil are left alone. There are a few seconds of very uncomfortable silence; each wants to say something careless and natural, and neither can think of a word. Bevil blunders out of silence first.

"I suppose your own will be the next wad-

ding shall we hear of, Lady Alexandra?" he says, clumsily.

"Mine?" she says, inquiringly, not lifting her eyes from her teacup. The changeful flicker of the red firelight upon her cheek may account for her changing colour.

"I heard this morning—" Bevil begins, and stops.

"Heard I was going to be married? To whom?" she asks, with an amused smile, lifting her eyes bravely.

"To Arthur Sneyd!"

"What an idea!" she laughs. "I would as soon think of marrying the man in the moon!"

Bevil might be dreadfully disappointed by her answer—he receives it in such moody silence.

She is embarrassed by his silence, and wishes Lady Courtenay or some one would come in. Some one does come in, so softly, that no one hears her.

Netta has lifted the *portière*, which is made of soft, noiseless cloth, and walked a few steps into the room. She sees the two sitting in silence—Alexandra, with her beautiful head drooping over her teacup, as she admires the delicate Dresden landscape on her saucer. Bevil gazing at her, so absorbed in his occupation that he does not see Netta, who is a little to his left.

"I beg your pardon," Netta says, her voice shrill with jealous anger, for she takes it for granted that they have been sitting in this suggestive silence ever since Bevil went in through the window. "I am afraid I shall disturb you. I had no idea—" and she flounces out of the room.

"Who is it?" Alexandra asks; but she knows who it must be, and pity for Bevil overmasters the angry confusion she feels in her heart. "I think I know," she says, gently, trying to make it less painful for him. "Do go and explain—I mean, tell her it was not a secret confabulation that she interrupted. Poor thing! she felt embarrassed, and, of course, surprised at seeing a stranger here."

But Bevil does not obey the gentle mandate. He leans his arms upon the chimney-piece, and stares moodily at the fire. Alexandra sees that it must be her part to put an end to the awkward position, when Lady Courtenay comes into the room with the letter.

She sees at once something has happened, but she only says,—

"I left Alice's letter in the pocket of one of my gowns, and I could not remember which."

Then Bevil, who lifted his arms from the prettily draped chimney-piece on his mother's entrance, and leaned his back against it instead, leaves the room abruptly, but not in pursuit of his angry betrothed, for he goes out into the dim garden, hardly visible now in the early darkness of the October evening.

"You have not quarrelled?" says Lady Courtenay, anxiously, laying down her letter and her pretences.

"Oh, no!" says Sandra, quietly. "Poor Bevil!" sighs Lady Courtenay. It is quite a genuine sigh, and her eyes fill with tears.

Alexandra is going to speak—hesitates, and says nothing. She examines the water-lilies on the chimney valance with intent scrutiny.

"Sandra, you see how wretched he is," cries Lady Courtenay. "He feels himself bound to that girl in honour, and he is miserable. There is time to save him now. If he is allowed to marry her it will be too late."

"How is he miserable?" Sandra asks, calmly, still observing the water-lilies as if she wanted to impress the pattern upon her mind in order that she may copy it from memory when she has time.

"You know he cares for you, Sandra, and not for her?"

"Indeed I do not," says Lady Alexandra, with gentle dignity. "He gave me no reason to think it, but he has given us every reason to think he cares for Miss Lovel. Please do not fancy such things, dear Lady Courtenay."

"It is not fancy. I know my boy," says

Lady Courtenay. "He has been a changed creature ever since this unfortunate entanglement. This girl is a perpetual worry to him."

"But you have her here?" Alexandra says, quietly.

"Yes, for a reason. My brother advised it," says Lady Courtenay, hurriedly. "Oh! Sandra, help me. You know he loves you—you and not her."

"If that were so, I must go away," she answers; "but I am sure it is not so. Please let us say no more about it. Where are all the girls?"

"At a tennis tournament. Miss Lawson—that is Miss Lovel—cannot play tennis."

Lady Alexandra smiles, an arch little smile which Lady Courtenay understands and resents.

"I assure you I had great difficulty in persuading Bevil to stay at home with her. He adores tennis, and has been as cross as a bear since the morning, when I persuaded him to stay. I was so anxious for him to meet you in this quiet way. He did not know you were coming. It was a surprise, and I think it has succeeded very well."

Alexandra frowns, and gives her head a little impatient jerk.

Lady Courtenay changes the conversation.

"And what in this about you and Arthur Sneyd?"

"Nothing. He is going to be married to Mrs. Ramsay, the great railway contractor's widow. I met him at the Durants the other day, and congratulated him."

She blushes a deep red, to Lady Courtenay's immense surprise. She knows she is blushing, for her cheeks are burning and she is vexed, especially at Lady Courtenay's astonishment, and feels she must explain it.

"I was thinking of something he told me," she says, hastily. "Only a bit of idle gossip."

"You don't mean that he told you scandal so bad that you blush at the thought of it, and cannot repeat it?" says Lady Courtenay, severely.

"Oh, no, no, nothing of that sort; only some circumstances that prevent," she stammers; so that Lady Courtenay jumps to a conclusion, all the more easily, because it is one for which she has been eagerly on the look-out.

"Something about Miss Lawson?"

Alexandra is so completely overcome with dismay that Lady Courtenay knows her guess was right, or nearly so.

"You must tell me now, or I shall think it is something worse than the truth," she urges.

"It is really nothing," says Sandra, "only that he met Miss Lovel on Hampstead Heath with a young man two or three weeks ago. Of course he magnified the incident, and painted the scene very melodramatically."

"The little treacherous creature!" Sandra, you must let me tell Bevil. He ought to know."

"Oh! pray do not tell him—not from me. Promise me you will not," pleads Alexandra. So Lady Courtenay, with great reluctance, promises to say nothing, "unless Bevil should want an excuse for getting out of his entanglement," she adds in a hurried whisper. And Alexandra has not time to say more, for the girls all come in from their tournament, hungry as hunters, and fresh tea has to be ordered, and Alexandra to be welcomed; and then Bevil comes in to hear about the tennis, to the account of which he listens with his eyes upon Alexandra, and a moody cloud in them; and nobody notices that Netta is absent, sulking in her room overhead.

CHAPTER VII.

"MOTHER, I am going to India to-morrow."

"My dear Bevil!"

Lady Alexandra went a week ago to the Everton wedding. Netta left this afternoon for London. To-morrow the whole Langdale and Courtenay forces set off for Scotland,

where they are going to stay until the Courtenays return to Croxley for Christmas.

"You have broken off your engagement!" Lady Courtenay exclaims, joyfully.

"I have done nothing of the kind, mother," Bevil answers, angrily. "I am a gentleman, I hope, and mean to keep my word."

Lady Courtenay's heart sinks wearily within her.

"Are you going to take Miss Lawson to India?" she asks; "or will she go back to the stage during your absence?"

"She will do as she pleases. She does not know yet. I only thought of it on my way back from the station."

Lady Courtenay dares not say another word. Her scheme has nearly succeeded. She has had Netta brought into close contact with other girls, and Bevil has seen the difference between them far more thoroughly than any preaching or word-painting of hers could have shown him; and though he has made spasmodic attempts to hide his feelings, every one in the house has seen that he is utterly weary of his whim. Only Netta has left Whitcliff engaged to him, and there the result is failure.

India is at least a gain. If Bevil carries out his plan there will be no marriage such as she dreads. But she not only dreads the Lovel alliance, but she longs intensely for matters to be settled with Alexandra, who is not likely to wait until he returns from India to pick up his handkerchief when she shall deign to throw it. There has been some gossip about the Marquis of Cumbrae, who is a more dangerous rival than penniless Arthur Sneyd was.

Bevil leaves the room suddenly. He has been looking over the *Daily Telegraph*, which reaches Whitcliff every day at ten o'clock, and has not spoken again. His mother thinks he has gone to make preparations for India, and Millicent finds her in tears.

"Your brother will kill me," she says, weeping. "If Cyril were only her eldest, how much happier we should all be! Cyril is rather inclined to be wild, but he is so bidable."

Bevil goes to find a Bradshaw. He searches it quickly; then, without a word of explanation, he walks out of the house to the railway station. It is a very quick walk, but he contrives to catch his train at the last minute. It takes him fifty miles in two hours, and deposits him at a station named Lowbury.

"Can I have a trap of some kind?" he asks the station-master. "I want to go to Croblam Castle."

The station-master touches his hat very respectfully to the gentleman who is going to the Castle.

"That is Lord Lowbury's whitechapel, sir; his lordship got out of the train when you did."

"Which is Lord Lowbury?" asks Bevil, to the station-master's surprise and slightly diminished respect. Can this gentlemanly young man be only a lawyer's clerk, or something of that kind come on business?

"The tall old gentleman, sir, in the grey coat."

Bevil goes up to him at once.

"I beg your pardon, my lord," he says, "I have not the honour of your acquaintance. My name is Bevil Courtenay, and I shall be greatly obliged if you will give me a seat in your trap as I find nothing else is at hand. I have important business with a guest at your house, whom I must see at once."

"Indeed!" says the Earl, much surprised. "Which of my guests? I believe a whole batch came yesterday, but I was in town."

He speaks suspiciously, and does not move from the step at which he stands to let Bevil mount. He does not take Bevil for a dun, but he wonders if he has come to challenge any of his guests to a duel, he looks so odd, so very much agitated.

"Lady Alexandra des Vaux," says Bevil. "I am going to India to-morrow. I should like to see her, if I may, to say good-bye."

"Oh! jump in!" says Lord Lowbury,

cordially, understanding the matter at once; and they drive to the Castle as swiftly as a pair of two hundred-guinea horses will carry them.

Lord Lowbury is such a kind, genial person that Bevil is led to confide in him at once. He does not tell the whole story. He only says:—

"There has been a misunderstanding between us, and I want to clear it up before setting off to-morrow. I saw in the papers this morning that she was at your house, and I suddenly thought I would just try my luck. Of course, this is in strict confidence, my lord. You see there are circumstances that make it almost impossible that I can have a favourable answer, and naturally I should like to keep it all quiet for the present."

When they drive up the avenue, they see a riding party dismounting at the door. It is half-past one.

"I think I had better get out here and walk on," says Bevil. "I must see her alone, you know. Can it be managed?"

"Yes, get out," say Lord Lowbury, pulling up. "She will go to her room now, most likely, to take off her habits before luncheon. I must tell Lady Lowbury something, you know, and she will arrange things for you."

The Lowburys are so kind, and enter so cordially into the plot, that after twenty minutes of waiting in her ladyship's morning-room, in which Bevil feels that he has had time to go to India and back, the door opens, and Lady Alexandra walks in.

"You!" she cries, recoiling in surprise. "Yes!" he says, going forward and taking her forcibly by the hand that she may not run away. "I have come to tell you that I must have you at any price, or I shall fling my worthless life away."

"What do you mean?" she asks, angrily. "Are you not engaged to be married? Why have you come here?"

"Because I am mad, at least, I have been mad—and now I am finding it out! Save me, Alexandra. Say you will love me, say you will be my wife?"

"I don't understand," she says, faintly. "Understand!" he cries, in passionate impatience. "It is easy enough to understand. I have made a fool of myself, as many other men have done. I never loved a woman but you and I never shall."

"And you come to say this to me while you are engaged to another woman?" she says, coldly.

"Alexandra, have you never heard of men who have been ruined for ever by such a mistake as I have made?" he says, earnestly, his wrath having subsided, "because they have not found it out in time? I have found mine out in time. Shall a mistaken sense of honour hold me back from setting things right?"

"And what about Miss Lovel's feelings?" Alexandra asks. "Are they not to be considered?"

"Miss Lovel's heart is not fixed upon me," he says.

"No, it is not," says Alexandra, impulsively, and then she colours, feeling horribly mean.

She knows Netta is false to him. Why, then, should she and Bevil be sacrificed for Netta's sake? If this ill-assorted marriage is consummated, how will it end? Probably as so many others of the kind have done, in disgrace and misery.

And there is time to save him, and she can do it, and yet it is so difficult to bend her outraged pride. She has been very unhappy lately; she knows she loves Bevil with all her heart, and that life will be hardly bearable without him.

"Well, what shall I do? Go to India to-morrow, to marry a natch-girl or to be eaten by a tiger, or go to a register office and marry Miss Lovel? It is for you to decide. I place my life in your hands!"

"Oh! that is cruel!" she cries, weakly.

"You are lost!" he exclaims, triumphantly.

"When a woman hesitates she is lost. You

love me, or you would not hesitate. Is a man never to be forgiven one act of folly? Will you not forgive me, though you love me? You know you love me!"

Then he takes her into his arms, and she makes but faint resistance.

"You are mine, my very own," he whispers, but as he bends his lips to hers she wrenches herself away.

"No, no!" she protests. "I am not your own yet. You still belong to her. You must not kiss us both!"

She flashes scarlet as she speaks.

"But you love me!" he repeats, in his surprise.

"Yes; let that do for the present; You must be off with the old love before you are on with the new. I do not wish to be mentioned in a breach of promise."

"She would never dare!" cries Bevil.

"You cannot trust her and her friends. No, no! I can say no more to-day, perhaps I should not have said so much. When you are off with your old love you may come back."

And that is all he can persuade her to say, and he returns to Whitcliff that evening.

"I am not going to India, mother," he says, coming to her with a face full of radiant happiness. "I am going to London by the night train."

"You are going to marry that wretched girl!" cries Lady Courtenay, off her guard in her sudden disappointment.

All day long she has been rejoicing over the idea of India. Anything is better than that wretched marriage; and she has given up all hope of Alexandra, since somebody this afternoon confirmed the news of her engagement to Lord Cumbrae.

"Bevil, she does not care for you. She carries on a clandestine flirtation with an old lover. Arthur Sneyd saw them. Alexandra des Vaux told me."

"Alexandra!" exclaims Bevil.

"Yes. I promised not to tell, but I must," and Lady Courtenay does tell the story, though she feels she may be ruining Alexandra's cause for ever, not knowing what has happened.

Bevil listens in silence. Here, at least, is a decent pretext for breaking off his engagement. How generous of Alexandra not to tell him! He writes that night to Netta, gives her his club address, and in the morning he sets off with his family for the north.

He knows that much awkwardness may come of the matter, but his father will willingly pay any amount of damages rather than let it go on; and even if he should have to submit to the annoyance of a law case there is Alexandra for a prize at the end.

CHAPTER VIII.

NETTA leaves Whitcliff with a weary dissatisfaction in her heart. "What is it all worth?" she thinks. "If my married life is to be years and years of the misery of these last few days it is not worth having."

But the farther she travels from Whitcliff and Lady Courtenay, who is so cold and distant, and Bevil, who is such an unlovable lover, and all those girls whose ways and manners are not as her ways and manners, the more the good things of her lot come into the foreground.

She would have to toll up many weary degrees of the ladder of theatrical success before she could expect to stay at such a house as Rock Lodge, and meet such people as Lady Langdale and Lady Alexandra on even apparent terms of equality—even before she could wear such clothes as she wears at this moment, and travel first-class, with the consciousness of luggage enough in the van behind her to inspire any railway porter with obsequious respect.

She would not like to give up these good things. She would not like to go back to her old life, her shabby dresses, the third-class

carriages, the weary treadmill existence she has left, whose monotony seems to have been broken only by the doubtfulness of getting another modest engagement; the society of Miss Standish and Miss Carrodus; the warmer, but, of course, more vulgar love-making of Jack Collinson.

She sighs at the last. She was very fond of Jack, and she would like to have him for a friend still. He was very fond of her, and she is quite sure his heart is broken. He will never care for anyone else.

Then as she gets out of the train at Victoria the first person she sees is Miss Edith Standish.

Netta's first impulse is to pretend she does not see her. It would be most unfitting that Lady Courtenay's guest should go straight into the society of a third-rate actress after quitting the society of ladies of rank; but her second impulse is to hurry after Edith. She does so want to hear all about the company—and Jack.

"Dear me!" Miss Standish exclaims, on finding herself accosted by this elegant lady, in her irreproachable travelling costume. "Wonders will never cease! Is it actually you, and do you condescend to speak to a poor thing like me after the grand company you have been in? I am honoured!"

Oh! she can never go back to spend her life with Miss Edith Standish and such as she; but she says, pleasantly,—

"I am so glad to meet an old friend. Will you come and have some tea with me? I want so much to hear all about you."

Miss Standish is nothing loth. She is delighted to have an opportunity of hearing what Netta has been doing, though, at the same time, she is vexed to give her the opportunity of narrating her adventures.

Netta leaves her luggage to be called for, and they go to a shop to have some tea.

"And when is your wedding coming off?" Miss Standish asks, when they are left alone.

"It is not fixed yet," says Netta. "Don't talk about me. I want to hear all about you."

"Has something gone wrong?" asks Miss Standish, curiously. "Didn't you get on with the grandees?"

"Nothing has gone wrong," says Netta, thinking that in case of accidents it would be better to prepare Miss Standish's mind, so that she shall not be ready to say that Netta has been jilted and held up to ridicule. "I don't know that I am very anxious for it, that's all. I would rather go back to the stage if I could. It's a very dull kind of life with these grand people."

Miss Standish does not in the least believe her; but she does not forget the words.

Netta goes on,—

"Are you acting at present? Where is Blanche Carrodus; and do you hear anything of Mrs. Hope?"

"No, nothing. Jack and I are at the Albany?"

She fires a little quick, conscious glance at Netta, and it is like a spark put to a train of gunpowder, taking immediate effect.

Instantly, Bevil and his fature title, and the present good things that come from him, become of no account at all compared with Jack.

She does not deign to ask Miss Standish what that meaning glance is intended to convey; but she resolves that she, run what risk she may, will assure herself that Jack cares for her only, and not Miss Standish.

She has nothing definite in her mind as to what she will do with his love, should it still be hers; but she is very certain that Miss Standish shall not have it.

"Where are you lodging?" she asks, when they part.

"At ten, Meredith-street, beside the theatre," says Edith.

"Did you say Blanche was with you?"

"No; I said nothing of the kind. There's only Jack with me, and he doesn't lodge in the

same house with me yet," she says, laughing; but she does not give Netta Jack's address.

Miss Bell is in wild excitement when Netta goes home, and is much disappointed when she sees how dull the girl looks, and how little she has to say.

"I hope nothing is going wrong?" she thinks, and she calculates what compensation must be her share of the damages, should something go wrong.

Netta goes to her room and shuts herself in, saying she has a letter to write that must be posted to-night.

This looks well, Miss Bell thinks, and comforts herself with a novel, while Netta is writing her letter.

At last she hears her come out of her room; but, to Aunt Charlotte's surprise, she goes downstairs and out of the house.

"This is queer!" Miss Bell muses; but before she has had time to wonder much Netta returns.

"You have been out?" says Miss Bell, interrogatively.

"Yes; I went to post a letter at the pillar outside."

The letter is not addressed to Bevil Courtenay but to Mr. John Collinson, Albany Theatre, Strand.

It is not very long, though it has taken so much time to write it; and Netta's stock of grey repp paper is very sensibly diminished.

"DEAR OLD FRIEND," it begins.

"I want so much to see you. I am unhappy, and in need of advice. I think I have made a mistake in life, and you must help me to get out of it. Unequal marriages can never lead to happiness. Tell me where to meet you to-morrow. Don't come here.—Yours always in spite of all, "NETTA."

When she wrote it, she had not the faintest intention of giving up Bevil Courtenay, should her old "friend" advise it ever so strongly. She only wanted to puzzle Jack, to tempt him to come to her, then to warn him against Miss Edith Standish, and to obtain him for evermore to her own side, as guide, philosopher and friend, of course.

She thought her letter was very cleverly constructed, and really committed her to nothing. The "mistake" might not necessarily be the marriage itself, but only an accident connected with it. Then she sits down by the fire, and tells Miss Bell everything that can be told about Whitliff.

She stays in all the next day, waiting for the post or for some message from Jack, but he makes no sign; the long hours go by. The hourly succession of countless footsteps passes the house, the postman comes five times along the row, but he brings nothing for her, until the night comes and goes, and with the morning he brings Bevil's letter—nothing more.

It is a terrible shock, in spite of all she has feared and thought, and planned against. She forgets everything, except the title and position she has lost; her constant humiliation at Whitliff, to find that Bevil liked being with those other girls better than with her; her jealous dread of Lady Alexandra; her sorrowful regrets for the old love and the old life.

Miss Bell watches her while she reads the letter.

"He—he's jilted you," she cries at the sight of Netta's angry, white face.

The horrible word strikes home! Jilted! How they will all sneer and triumph—Miss Standish, Miss Carrodus, and all of them; Jack, too, he will not say much, but he will think all the more. Perhaps he knew something of it, had some reason for expecting it, and that is why he holds her so cheaply now. He thinks she is hedging, as they say about betting, trying to make sure of him falling Bevil.

"I don't care two straws for him," she says to her aunt, meaning the man who has jilted her; "but he will make other people despise me. No one will care for me now."

"Well, Netta," says Aunt Charlotte, "to tell the truth, I have been expecting it all

along, but if you mean no one else will, marry you; you need not be afraid. Such damages as you will get will make quite an heiress of you at once. Besides, any manager will jump at engaging you now. You can command your salary; you will be a celebrity!"

"Damages!" Netta repeats, horrified.

"Of course you must make him pay for it," says Aunt Charlotte. "You must not be squeamish. You cannot afford it. Think how much he has cost you, your salary, and mine too?"

"Oh! I cannot," and Netta bursts into tears. She is forsaken all round. Where is Jack? Why has he not answered her letter? Has she not a friend in the world?

She cries all night and next morning. She is really ill, to Aunt Charlotte's great satisfaction.

"It will be so much better for the damages," she thinks, and, without telling Netta, she puts on her bonnet and goes to see a solicitor.

The solicitor is delighted with the aspect of the case.

"We shall ask for fifty thousand damages, and we shall get thirty at least!" Then Miss Bell goes back to South Kensington, and tells Netta what she has done.

"Thirty thousand pounds!" Netta repeats. That certainly would be some compensation; for since her aunt has left her this morning she has remembered that the very rooms they are in, and the food they eat, and the clothes she is wearing are of Bevil's providing, and must be given up; and she has no money to go on with except two pounds. Jack has made no sign. It is cruel of him to forsake her thus.

Then she thinks that perhaps he has not got her letter. It was addressed to the theatre, and Miss Standish may have intercepted it—or he may be very ill—or the pillar may not have been cleared. Such strange accidents sometimes befall letters.

Her anger against him cools down, and she feels that even thirty thousand, or even fifty thousand, or all the world, would not compensate her for the loss of him.

She must find out whether bringing the action would alienate him from her for ever, or whether he would think it only a just vengeance upon Bevil Courtenay, and the damages only a desirable contribution to the joint-housekeeping of himself and Netta.

She cannot go to meet him at the theatre, for she would be recognised at least by Edith Standish. She must find out his address, and beard the lion in his den.

"I must go out for some fresh air," she says to Miss Bell, having heard all she has to say, and all that Mr. Kirke, the solicitor, said, and all that Bevil and his people are likely to say, and all that the world will say. "Do you think you could get me the last *Era*? I want to see the advertisements before I go out. I shall have to find a new engagement, you know."

"There's no hurry," says Aunt Charlotte. "It will look much better if you are obliged to keep your room. Now if you would only go to bed!"

Netta is too impatient to argue. She puts on a long, dark cloak, and ties a thick veil over her face.

"Everyone will think I am in bed all the same," she says, "for no one will recognise me in this."

Then she goes out, stops an omnibus, and is taken to the Strand.

She gets out at a coffee-house largely patronised by the theatrical profession. She orders tea and a steak in a private room.

"It doesn't look like being much damaged having such a good appetite," she thinks; "but I must not let myself be tired and hungry, or my brain won't work."

Then she asks for the *Era*, and searches the advertisement columns while she waits for her steak.

She finds the advertisement she wants. Not a manager's advertisement for a "lady," lead—

ing or otherwise, but the address of Mr. John Collinson.

She has hardly patience to eat the steak, which she accomplishes with her veil half raised, so that, being consequently doubled, it looks like a mask, and arouses the curiosity of the house, who are not accustomed to ladies so chary of exhibiting their faces. At last she has finished her repast, and paid for it—out of Bevil's money—and she is off.

She finds the house easily. It is quite close at hand. Mr. Collinson is not at home, but she says she will wait. She has to see him on important business. The landlady is doubtful, but Netta looks so adlylike in spite of the mystery of her veil, that she is admitted and shown into the dirty tobacco and beer and brandy-scented apartment that serves Mr. Collinson for drawing-room, dining-room, bedroom and dressing room.

It is six o'clock. He is sure to come before going to the theatre to see if there are any letters, if for nothing more.

Netta establishes herself as comfortably as possible in a greasy arm-chair, and prepares to wait.

"I'll just look at his things," she says to herself, and goes to the table to begin her inspection; but the door suddenly opens, and her heart jumps with a violence that nearly makes her faint.

It is only the servant, whom the landlady has told to "keep her eye" upon the stranger. The maiden, unable through the door to obey literally, has kept her ear upon her, and at the first sound of a movement bounces into the room to see what the veiled lady is "after." Netta understands quite well.

"You need not be afraid of me," she says to the abashed girl. "I don't want to steal anything. Is Mr. Collinson quite well, and has he been at home every day lately?"

Both questions are answered "yes." Still, the letter may have miscarried. Here, in Jack's own room, she feels so much nearer to him, as if she had gone back to the old life they had in common, and Bevil and Whitcliff are not the unrealities.

She is quite sure that when Jack comes in and sees her he will forget her desertion, and be ready to take her to his heart again.

"You can stay here," she says to the servant. "I want to hear about Mr. Collinson. It is dull waiting alone, and, besides, you will see that I don't help myself to his valuable property," she adds, laughing.

She gives the girl half-a-crown, and asks her when Mr. Collinson usually comes in, and if he comes in alone.

"If anyone comes in the house with him now I will give you another half-a-crown to keep them out, and let him come into the room alone."

"Are you his sister, miss?" asks the girl. "No, only a friend—a very old friend."

"You're going to be married to him, likely?"

"I don't know. You are very impudent," says Netta, angrily; then she remembers that the girl is a useful ally, so she says, nervously, "Why do you think I am going to be married to him? Is there any talk of that kind about him?"

She blushes so hotly that she is obliged to put up her veil, and the girl sees her pretty young face at last, and is drawn into further confidences.

"They do talk about him and Miss Sandiah, miss," she says. "I thought you was her at first."

She is amply repaid for her news by seeing the angry flash in Netta's eyes, and the indignant stiffening of her small figure.

"That is all nonsense!" she says, in the heat and haste of her jealous rage. "He is going to marry me. We had a quarrel, but it is all right again, or do you think I would do such a thing as come to his lodgings?" she asks, severely virtuous.

"Miss Sandiah has been sometimes," says the girl, and then flies to answer a bell, promising to return.

Netta, left alone with her jealousy, paces the room like a young caged panther. Where is he now? Why does he not come in? She vows she will not leave the house until she sees him, and has everything explained.

He can know nothing yet about the disastrous end of her engagement. She will not tell him until she has made sure that his love is still hers. Oh! when will he come in?

Eight o'clock strikes. No chance of him now until after the play. It is a wrong thing to do, she knows, but she is playing for a stake for which it seems worth while to risk everything.

She will wait till he comes in. She must make sure of him before he hears that she has been cast aside by her rich lover.

How long the hours are! She does her best to make them pass by, reading the newspapers that she finds lying about, and by talking to the servant.

After all, it is very unlikely that he will come home the moment he is out of the theatre, or that he will come in alone.

Jane, the servant, says there are nearly always some other gentlemen with him, and sometimes he has ladies to supper as well.

She waits, and then sees she must give up for the present. It is ten o'clock. She is awfully tired, and she is sure that she will not have the opportunity she wants.

Before she goes she will take one more look round to see if she can find any trace of her letter.

If it has been received, and left unanswered, she will give up the game. She has not dared yet to look through the heap of letters and bills beside the inkstand lest she should be suspected by Jane and the landlady of dishonest purposes; but now, being desperate, she says to Jane,—

"I want to look through those papers to see if there is a letter of mine there. You can watch me; and then, if anything should be lost, you will know it was not I who stole it."

Jane makes no objection; and Netta, with a heart beating afresh and faster, begins her search.

Letters in unknown handwritings, memoranda, bills, advertisements—she goes through them all in vain.

She does not find her own grey repp paper. Such ladies as have corresponded with Mr. Collinson have used paper of every other possible colour and quality.

She remembers her own perfectly, so she hardly glances at the others, until she comes to a torn fragment of white notepaper covered with Jack's own cramped writing.

She would pass it over too, only she sees her own name, and she takes it out of the pile, and reads it.

"MY DARLING NETTA," it begins.

"You have injured me cruelly. You have nearly spoiled my life; but I believe you are penitent, and that your real love having never been given away from me we may still be happy if you have courage to throw off the chains that bind you."

"I understand your little note, darling. I have this moment received it; and, in spite of all, as you say, I am ready to forgive, and I will be with you in the morning."

"You were dazzled by rank and wealth, and you are so young, I must not be hard upon you. My love can never change, and I know

Here the fragment breaks off. Netta does not pause to ask why. Her brain is whirling with joy. Probably his letter was interrupted, and then lost, and his complete one has been delayed somehow. It is so late she has no time to think. She takes paper, pen and ink, and writes.

"24, A. Telphi-terrace,

"October 20. h, 1884.

"MY OWN JACK,

"I have found your letter, and I am so happy. I never loved any one but you, and I never mean to marry anyone else. I care nothing for titles and money, only for love.

Money is rubbish, and love is everything. Come to me in the morning. I have been so miserable, and now I am so happy."

"Your loving wife,

"NETTA."

She seals the letter, puts it in a conspicuous position on the chimney-piece, gives Jane five shillings in the fulness of her joy, and departs.

CHAPTER IX.

"LAWSON V. COURTENAY."

THE case comes on, after all.

"Fifty thousand certain," says Netta's friends, but the other side says little; they keep so quiet that Mr. Kirke is uneasy.

"They have something behind," he says, "or they would make a compromise rather than bring it into court. Sir Robert would not mind paying a good sum down to be out of it."

Netta excites universal sympathy. She has been gleaned a harvest since her return to the stage as far as salary goes, and the sale of her photographs has equalled that of any other competitor; but all the time she looks weary and sad, the ideal of a forsaken nymph, and the public think she is breaking her heart, and are of opinion that a hundred thousand pounds would be small compensation for her woes.

When she comes into the witness-box she is pale and thin, a very "broken flower," and it is whispered that she is much averse to bringing on the action, but has been prevailed upon by her relatives. She gives her evidence quietly and firmly, and then thinks she has nothing to do but leave the court with the silent but fearful sympathy of the court, when Sir Charles Pollen, Bevil's counsel, pounces upon her.

"You are acquainted with Mr. John Collinson, are you not? You have acted in the same company very frequently, I believe?"

Netta colours, but answers "yes" quietly. "You and he were on very intimate terms before you met the defendant, were you not?"

"Not particularly," says Netta, losing patience.

"Please to remember you are on your oath," says Sir Charles, sternly, and all the colour fades out of Netta's face. "Were you not engaged to be married to him?"

"Never!"

"But you were lovers, 'keeping company,' were you not? You used to go out walking with him?"

Netta admits the walks.

"And since your supposed engagement with Mr. Courtenay have you or have you not walked alone with Mr. Collinson on Hampstead Heath?"

"That was nothing!" Netta answers.

"That is for the jury to decide, Miss Lawson. Did you or did you not walk with him on Hampstead Heath on the 22nd of September last?"

"Yes, I believe I did—yes, I did," Netta says, defiantly.

"While Mr. Courtenay was absent from London?"

"Yes; but he came that night."

"And you told him about your morning's walk?"

"No. There was no occasion. It was nothing!"

"Are these letters in your writing?"

Two letters are handed to Netta—the grey repp note she sent to Jack, which was never answered, except by the fragment she found—the hurried, heedless lines she wrote at his lodgings, with date and address, which had been answered by two or three lines, very severe, and much to the purpose.

"Yes," she says, colouring, and thinking Jack need not have kept her letters, and then given them up, though she does not understand the bearing they have upon her case.

"Thank you, that will do," says Sir Charles, with a triumphant smile.

Netta's witnesses are all useful enough. Miss Bell, the manager of the theatre with whom she broke her engagement, Mrs. Julius Hope, and others. There is no doubt that she was, formally and fast, engaged to be married to Mr. Bevil Courtenay.

Then Bevil comes into the witness box, admits the promise of marriage, but declares that he was justified in breaking it, because the plaintiff did not want to marry him, as she preferred someone else—Mr. John Collinson.

Then Bevil's witnesses are called, and three do his work for him—John Collinson, who swears to the letter that came by post, which he had at first thought of answering by renewing his offer of marriage, but which he had finally left unanswered, having heard something from Miss Sandish that made him suspicious of Miss Lawson's singleness of purpose. The second letter he had found on his chimney-piece, and had been told that a lady wrote it who had waited in his room from seven o'clock till half-past ten on the evening of October 20th 1884.

Jane Withers, domestic servant, corroborated this evidence, and adds her own, which is very telling.

Edith Smith, known in the theatrical profession as Edith Sandish, tells the court how she met the plaintiff the day she returned from visiting Lady Courtenay at Whiteliff, which was two days before she received Mr. Courtenay's letter, and that Miss Lawson looked out of spirits, and said that she was not very anxious for the marriage, and would rather go back to the stage.

This is considered sufficient. It is impossible to consider a lady's feelings or prospects to have been very much injured in the face of this evidence.

The jury, with a minute's consultation, give their verdict in accordance with the judge's summing up, and the unanimous feeling of the public.—

"For the plaintiff. Damages, one shilling!"

So Jack is avenged, and Bevil is free, and Netta has to make her hay while the sun of her notoriety shines, by drawing big houses for a few weeks, after which she must subside into obscurity once more.

Poor Aunt Charlotte is really the most injured one, and she has a great deal of difficulty in meeting with another situation, as the share of fame that has come to her through Netta is not of advantage to a governess.

Real fear of starvation impels her to write a letter to Lady Alexandra Courtenay on the day that her wedding is recorded in the papers. She merely asks for a recommendation; but Alexandra understands, and represents to her husband that, as he has got off very easily so far, he might take poor Miss Bell's claim into consideration, seeing that he was the sole instigator of her giving up her situation.

He agrees with his two days' bride, and sends Miss Bell a very munificent present, which he trusts she will accept for old friendship's sake; but Lady Alexandra does not think that she would be quite justified in recommending Miss Bell as an instructress of youth.

"All's well that ends well!" says Miss Bell, pocketing her cheque.

[THE END]

During the revolution in France between 1788 and 1794 over one million of human beings were put to death by the guillotine and otherwise. The bodies of the guillotined in Paris were skinned, and the skins tanned, and chiefly used for making leather breeches and straps for the soldiers. Female skins, being thinner, were principally used for making gloves. Napoleon the First discouraged this gruesome practice.

WITHOUT A REFERENCE.

CHAPTER XXX.

WERE Miss Parr to place the matter in a lawyer's hands, where were her proofs? and where was her money? She had one hundred and fifty pounds; but if a detective was sent out to India to look into matters that had happened twenty years previously one hundred and fifty pounds would not go far.

There was Roger, but Roger would be a bad detective; he was so open, so impetuous, so rash; and, moreover, how could he get leave?

She must depend upon herself, as she had often done before. Mr. Paske must have some vulnerable point; the rhinoceros could be killed in one place, a small one it was true—the eye; Mr. Paske might be stripped up and caught by means of his old chum, Mr. Horne.

And now she was tired of this long waiting on events. Everything does not come to those who wait; when it does arrive it is generally too late for them to enjoy it. She would strike a bold stroke, and take the consequences; she would precipitate matters.

The two friends were going to spend the evening in the smoking-room. It was chilly enough now at the end of September. The windows were closed, the curtains drawn. Why should she not conceal herself behind the curtains of the deep bay window, and listen to their conversation?

She would glean more in that way in a night than she would pick up from chance "talks" with Mr. Horne in months.

No sooner thought of than done. She slipped down the passage, and down four steps, and found the door of the smoking room ajar. It looked bright and comfortable, with candles, arm-chairs, and a nice fire, in front of which was drawn up a small table, with a case of spirits and a box of cigars. It all looked very snug indeed—just the place for a confidential interview!

Sara had barely time to get behind the window curtains when she heard Mr. Horne's loud voice in the passage outside.

"This is something like!" said Mr. Horne, cheerily, as he threw himself into an arm-chair, and stretched out his legs. "Pon my word, Mr. P., you have not made a bad thing of it! Now, have you?"

"Nor you; and by Jove, you have six to four the best of it," said the other, drawing up a chair.

"Now, I'd like to know how you make that out?" said Mr. Horne, lighting a cigar. "You, with your town house, your country place, your men-servants and maid-servants, your wife with her diamonds, your step-daughter with her airs, your own—"

"Stop; leave Amy out of the list!" said Mr. Paske, sharply.

"Well, with all these items, and plenty of money at your bankers, you are a happy, prosperous man. What more do you want? Whilst I—I am a sort of loafer without a home, that lives in lodgings, and on whatever you give him!"

"You are a precious expensive loafer, I can tell you, Charlie Horne. I've paid you in one way or another twelve hundred within two months."

"And what's that to a man with five thousand a year?"

"Five thousand a-year, that gives me precious little pleasure. Do you think I care for a carriage and horses, and giving big balls and dinners to people who don't care twopence about us and would out us if we had no coin. I loathe it all—hate it! My wife spends, Miss Pontifex spends, the servants spend, you spend! I am only the paymaster—that's my part—and supposed to be my pleasure! I often wish I just had a little place, and a bit of a garden, and a pipe, and say a hundred a year, and peace."

"You used not to think that in Port Augusta long ago. You were all for going out in the world, and making a great stir and a great name, and being a very fine fellow. You were ambitious, Mr. P., even in short jackets—ambitions of money and power, and to get them with as little personal trouble as possible; and—by Jove—" blowing a cloud of tobacco into the air—"you did. You got your wish!"

"So you think. I pulled the chestnuts out of the fire, and you ate them, my friend!"

"True, and so did you. You have had a very good time this last twenty years, have you not?"

"Yes, I suppose so!" he admitted, reluctantly.

"Suppose so! Better than making a few ruppes on some desolate mountain tea estate in India, or on some desolate 'run' up country at home. You always were a gambler, even as a brat of a boy, I've heard, and you threw for a big stake and collared it."

"And played no more. Now you go on gambling still, and some day you will ruin me, and the whole thing will burst up. I have always expected it."

"And if it does, what a comedown for Miss Pontifex! You have spoiled that girl—woman, I mean. She has had her head turned."

"Not I! She has it in the blood. She was born so!"

"To-night she looked as if she would like to have my blood, as if she would bite me!"

"She is all bark, no bite!" said Mr. Paske, with a faint attempt at wit. "When do you think of going back to Australia, Charlie, my boy?"

"Oh, I don't know!"

"Why, you talked of this autumn?"

"Did I? Well, it was only talk!"

"And yet you say the life over here is slow, and you are sick of it, and long for Australia, and dampers, and old chums, and watch horses."

"Oh, you want to get rid of me!"

Silence.

"Come, silence gives consent! Speak out your mind!"

"Well, to be as plain spoken as you are, I do. People wonder why you are always hanging about me. They will begin to suspect. My wife and family don't fancy you!"

"No," with a loud guffaw. "Anyone can see that!"

"And I am always in fear of your letting fall some word that may do mischief."

"I am safe enough. Have I not been mum for twenty years? I am as safe as a church!"

"Yes! but I have a queer presentiment of evil. Whether it is that my liver is out of order or what I don't know; but I feel ill and depressed. You know that girl would not stay in the convent and scout the action of taking the veil. She has come home."

"Good gracious! You don't mean it!"

starting up.

"Yes, I do. I did all I could to keep her in Calcutta, I stopped her allowance. However, she made her way to London. She went to Dombey and Son, and wanted my address. She is a very determined piece of goods!"

"The deuce she did!"

"And, of course, I told them not to notice her."

"And is that all?"

"No; not long ago I had a visit—it was last January—from a Mrs. Hyde, a friend of hers. She wanted me to acknowledge her as my daughter, and produce her certificate of birth, and all that sort of thing."

"Why?"

"Because she was about to marry—to marry well, and the man naturally wanted to know who she was, and who her people were?"

"Yes, and were you equal to the occasion?"

"I think so. I said she was a station-master's daughter, and her name was Snandy. I had had her educated out of charity, and had done a great deal for her. I sent her ten pounds, and advised her to go into service, for I would have nothing more to do with her."

as she had come to England against my express wish."

"Haw, haw, haw! What a cool card you are, James! No taking you back! Catch a weasel asleep. Ten pounds out of five thousand a year—all her own money! Well, that's a good joke!"

"Hush, you idiot! Walls have ears!"

"Not in an old house like this, my friend! How nervous you are, and you certainly are looking very seedy. Is it true you take chloral? It's a bad habit, you know?"

"Yes; but I am obliged to. I sleep so badly."

"Rarely you have got over that by this time?" with another hoarse laugh. "Do you have bad dreams?"

"I tell you I can't sleep. It's constitutional, the doctor says, and it's uncommonly trying."

"The doctor says! What does he know? Constitutional! Oh, my eye!"

"Well, and about Australia?"

"Yes, and what about it?" in a sleepy voice.

"What will you take to go back? You must see it does not do, your hanging about. My wife often wonders I put up with your insolence; and she has been hinting that you have a hold over me, and levy blackmail, and it's not very pleasant."

"Blackmail is an ugly word," using an oath. "What would she call appropriating five thousand a year for twenty years, eh? One hundred thousand pounds! That's something like a sum, and worse than any amount of blackmail. It's downright highway robbery!"

"Blackmail or not, what will you take to go—to go and never come back?"

"Ten thousand pounds down on the nail, no less."

"Ten thousand! Say a hundred whilst you are about it," said Mr. Paske, sarcastically.

"No," doggedly. "I say ten and stick to ten, no more and no less. I may take more!"

"And where am I to get ten thousand pounds? You know very well the estate is tied up. I cannot touch a shilling of the capital, and never could."

"And a good job too! It would have been gone long ago. You can insure your life, and raise it in that way."

"I think five are as much as I can give you."

"Then I advise you to think again, for I won't budge under ten," said Mr. Horne, with much resolution in his tone.

"Horne, do you know that sometimes I feel as if I could murder you?"

"I daresay. It is not the first time you have had that feeling about a man; but you won't do it as you did before for I am always armed, with this very nice pocket revolver!"

Sara peeped out cautiously with just one eye. Mr. Horne had a glass of highly-coloured whisky in one hand, and a revolver that he was gazing at affectionately in the other. Mr. Paske was lying back in the chair, an extinguished cigar between his lips, surveying him with a look of absolutely murderous hate.

"Well, I suppose you must get it," he said after a pause. "Any sacrifice to get rid of you. I daresay I'll manage it by the end of the month, and then I'll hand you over the money, and you will hand me over the papers."

"What papers?" said the other, coolly.

"Don't pretend you don't understand, and don't be a fool! Why the papers—the marriage certificates, her birth certificate, her letters. All the things in that brown leather portfolio that you stole!"

"Yes, I certainly did steal them—they represent my bread and cheese. Do you think that if I had not cribbed them I would ever have been able to have squeezed a shilling from you? No, James, I knew you for a hard, scheming man, that lets nothing stand in your way when you have an end to gain. You would have pushed me aside,

down into the gutter. It would be only your word against mine, and you a rich man and I a poor one. An impostor, you would have said; but luckily I have the proofs. Oh, that was a grand day for me when I came into this study, and you were out, only for a second, and I recognised the brown portfolio, and carried it off. I never would have guessed its value had you not made such a fuss and such a looking up of it once, when I came upon you unexpectedly once before."

"Where is it now?"

"At my lawyers. No, no, you have no chance. You can't steal it. It's in a strong box and only to be given up by my written authority."

"You will give it up for ten thousand pounds?"

"And set you free for ever?" with a sneer.

"And set me free for ever," he repeated.

"And supposing I won't?"

"Then you must support yourself in future."

"And peach on you?"

"Yes, if you like. [It] will ruin me, of course."

"Ruin you! Hang you, you mean!"

"No I don't. There is no fear of my neck, thank you. I shall lose the money. I may get a year's imprisonment—that is the most harm you can do me."

"A year's! You'll be as fit as a fiddle as I sit here!"

"And you will starve! You could not earn an honest penny if your life depended on it. You can cheat at cards and over races. That's your way of earning money!"

"If I were you I would be ashamed to talk of honest pennies. I wonder the word does not choke you!"

"And if I were you I'd take ten thousand pounds and clear out of this country. It's a good offer, and you will never get a better, so think it over carefully."

"Well, I'll think it over, and let you know to-morrow."

"You must fire the papers."

"If I do you must make it twelve thousand."

"What a rascal you are, Charlie Horne!"

"The same to you. You are the pot if I am the kettle. It's a temptation to collar the swag, and go back to her country. I've a longing to see the old blue gum trees, and the bright sky out there once more, and to hear the bleating and mooing in the stock-yards."

"How poetical and romantic, and to gamble in low dens, and to drink in bars, and to swagger over the old chums as long as you have a coin in your pocket."

"Talking like that is a good way to make me give you what you want, is it not?"

"Oh! if you sink me I sink you. We sink or swim together; and I fancy you know on which side your bread is buttered; no one better."

"I'm not sanguine in that. Well, time is flying, and I must go. It's nearly one o'clock. I'll let you have an answer to-morrow, and if it is yes you and I pay over within a month. I'm thinking of taking a wife out with me. What do you say to that?"

"Who—who would have you?"

"Oh! a monstrous fine girl, and one that looks as well bred as any lady in the land—your wife's maid, Sara Farr. I suppose you have noticed her?"

"I don't like that girl."

"Then she and I will be in the same boat, so that's as it should be. She is handsome, young, agreeable, and clever."

"Ay! that's just it. She has a fine pair of eyes and a sharp tongue. She is clever. Take care you don't find her too clever for you some day. Is it settled that you are going to marry her?"

"Quite."

"Have you asked her?"

"No; but that is a mere matter of form. The girl is madly in love with me!" he said, impressively.

"Everyone to their taste. As far as I am

concerned, I shall be glad to see the last of her. She always seems to me as if she was looking for something, and always had her ears pricked." Clever Mr. Paske!

"She was probably watching and listening for me," said Mr. Horne, with outrageous conceit.

"Oh, possibly!" said the other, with a grunt.

"Well, I'm off. You had better let me out through the window here, not to be knocking up your house and grand men-servants. Lord, if they only knew! Many a time I have seen you cleaning your father's horse and buggy, and chopping wood!"

By this time Mr. Paske had pushed back the curtains and opened the window, letting a cold blast into the room. Luckily for Sara he brought no candle, and she stood cowering up in a corner, scarcely venturing to draw her breath.

Mr. Paske was in a hurry to speed the parting guest. Mr. Horne was in a hurry to be gone. He made his exit quickly, the window was closed, the curtain drawn, and Sara still stood with her knees knocking together, her face damp with perspiration, but undisturbed.

Mr. Paske drew up to the fire, lit a cheroot, poured out nearly half a tumbler of raw brandy, and sat over the coals buried in thought, running his squarely-shaped hands through his grizzly hair, and occasionally muttering aloud.

At last he fell asleep. The fire went out, the clock on the mantelpiece struck three. Sara was tired and cold. She slipped off her shoes and stealthily crept out from her hiding-place. She was safe; he was snoring. Gently she reached the door, softly she turned the handle, and stole up like a ghost to her own room.

Luckily no one shared it with her. She then undressed rapidly in the dark, said her prayers, and got into bed and slept soundly.

Her boldness and audacity had been rewarded. She had done a good night's work, and found out something at last!

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE day after her adventure in the smoking-room Sara locked herself securely into her own room, and sat down and wrote the following letter—a letter which took some thought, and a considerable amount of time:—

"DEAR CAPTAIN HYDE,—

"At last I have discovered something! Waiting for events, or for chance slips of conversation, was weary and useless, especially when I had to work hard all the time, and—keep my place."

"Last night I was resolved on a bold stroke, and I have been repaid for my venture! Mr. Horne dined here, and he and Miss Pontifex had high words at dinner, and a violent quarrel. She told him plainly that he was only fit to be in the servants' hall, that he was drunk, and that she would never sit in the room with him again; and Mr. Paske sat by, to his relation's amazement, looking round, but saying nothing, instead of, as they expected, kicking the insolent wretch out of the house; but afterwards, in the privacy of his smoking-room, Mr. Paske said a great deal to Mr. Horne, and I was behind the window curtain, and heard every word they uttered."

"I was not discovered. If I had been I doubt if I would be writing you this letter."

"They drank brandy, or whisky, and smoked and quarrelled. Mr. Paske wants Horne to quit the country. He says his hanging on here is suspicious; that people wonder that his own family detect him, that he had much better return to Australia and stay there."

"After much wrangling Horne agreed to go on payment of ten thousand pounds, to be raised by Mr. Paske by insuring his life."

"They talked of the girl who had come home from India, meaning me; and Mr.

Paske related how he had had an interview with a bold young woman, a Mrs. Hyde, who had asked him to acknowledge the girl as his eldest daughter. This he had declined, and had dismissed her with a ten pound note, and a piece of advice for her *protégée*. 'Ten pounds out of five thousand a year,' said Horne, and they both laughed—wretches!

'Horne is to receive twelve thousand pounds down when he gives up a little portfolio containing certificates, letters, and papers, which he stole from his confederate, in order to have a score hold over him.'

'This exchange is to take place in about ten days. The papers are deposited at a bank in Dover.'

'Once Mr. Paske gets them into his hands he will destroy them, of course. Why he did not do so before seems strange; but why do gullies men so often keep the proofs of their crimes?'

'It is my aim to get hold of this portfolio by hook or by crook; if not we are lost. Mr. Horne, so I heard him say, intends to marry me, and take me out to Australia as his bride. He admitted that he had not asked me yet, but as he is quite certain of my consent he considers that to be an insignificant detail. Oh! if I could only lay my hands on those papers—the certificates of my parents' marriage and of my birth, we would no longer be two pawns.'

'I shall do my very best to gain my end, and may have to call upon you for assistance. There is Miss Pontifex's bell, and I must go.'

'Yours faithfully,

'SARA PARR.'

To this letter she received a short note in reply.

'DEAR SYLVIA,—

'I prefer this name to Sara. I have received and burnt yours. All I can say is that you are a wonderful girl; and if we are to succeed, you will carry us through single-handed. At the same time, command me to any extent. I shall not leave Dover—not go far from barracks, so that a wire from you will always find me.'

'The latest news is, that a year having elapsed since Robert Hyde's death, and I have no proofs of my wife's birth, the fortune has lapsed to Bernard. I received a notice to that effect this morning from Sharp and Shon.'

'I also hear that he is going to be married immediately to Mrs. Dering. Only for her, and Uncle Robert's fears and hatreds, I would not have lost the money; and now, in spite of his animosity and his mad will, she is going to have the spending of his fortune alive. It's enough to make him rise from his grave!'

'Yours,

'R. H.'

This piece of news was quite true; and a few days later there was a smart wedding at St. Peter's, Eaton-square, when Bernard Hyde, Esq., led to the altar the beautiful Mrs. Dering, widow of the late Augustus Dering, of Moss-side Park and Oxton-street—vide the morning papers.

Bernard had suddenly scrambled up the ladder, and touched the summit of his ambition—a handsome wife, and an immense fortune.

How quickly he had got up these latter rungs of the ladder, and Roger and his pauper wife were left at the bottom!

Bernard had tied himself to an adventuresome life. It was a capital joke, and his wife entered into it with wonderful spirit.

They went to Paris and Vienna, and spent money, and were overwhelmed with presents and letters of congratulations and greetings from casual acquaintances whom they met abroad, and who seemed to have suddenly developed into old and intimate friends.

Oh! what it is to have nine thousand a year! It opens up a vista of town and country houses, shooting, hunting, dinners, balls, and even game and flowers to the sharp

eyes of some people, who would cross the street to avoid you had you shabby boots and umbrella, and only two hundred a-year. Nothing succeeds like success.

Sara's 'day out' was a bright one—early in November. The sun was so warm, the sea so smooth, the sky so blue, that you could scarcely realise that you were not in the early days of September; and some of the ladies who promenaded on Dover parade, seemed to be still clinging to their summer frocks.

Sara, according to request, had made herself very smart. She looked 'quite the lady,' a regular tip-topper, thought Mr. Horne, when he first caught sight of her in her neat tailor-made jacket, boa and muff, small toque, and well-cut French gloves.

He paid her a good many compliments as they strolled up and down in the sun that lovely day.

'Let us sit down here,' said Mr. Horne, pointing to a bench, 'and take our ease, and quiz the passers-by.'

'Yes, but I'd much rather you would tell me another story,' said the wily Sara. 'Some more about Australia. I liked the last so much.'

'Well, I must think. I suppose you don't know much about India? But I'll tell you a story of Australia and India mixed. That may interest you. Or,'—as if struck with a sudden thought—'shall we go off and get our photographs done? Morning is the best time. We would make a handsome group!'

'No, no, no. I am tired. Let us stay here, and please tell me your story. I like sitting here quietly, and watching the sea.'

'Well, once upon a time there was a chap over in Australia—a doctor's son—a sharp lad, but always looking beyond what he had in hand, always craving to better himself and be a big swell; and this craving lost him many a place, for with looking to the future he neglected the present, and seemed to be always expecting a fortune to drop into his hands.'

'He was first a clerk, and he lost that billet; then on a run as accountant and stock-keeper, he lost that; then he went to Melbourne, and went in for gambling, and did well for a while, strange to say. He was a hard chap. He fought with his mother over the little the doctor left, and stripped her almost bare, and spent what he took. He seemed to think, though he was only the son of a straggling doctor, that he had a right to the best of everything, the same as a duke's heir, and did not care what he did, or who he trampled on to get it.'

'Oh! he was hard, and selfish, and grasping, and ambitious, and yet he did not feel inclined to work for all this. He was nearly thirty years of age and still nothing particular, still on the look out, when he thought he would go off to India, and take to tea in Assam. There was a former schoolfellow there doing pretty well, and he knew something of chemistry, and thought he might try a new way of trying to live, a new field for his enterprise.'

'Yes; and did he succeed?' inquired Sara.

'In a way he never expected. He was only up beyond Shillong about six months when the tea planter lost his wife came, and in for a great fortune, being next-of-kin to some old lady he had never even heard of in England. However, the lawyers had ferreted him out, and there was the fortune all waiting him, and all tied up—strange to say.'

'He did not seem much set on it. His wife's death was a great blow, and he did not seem to get over it. He was going down country on business to some solicitors in Calcutta with this overseer of his, and he fell out of the train and was killed! They were in the same carriage, and the Australian, with great presence of mind, changed identities, and made out that the overseer was killed, and the tea planter survived.'

'In India one has lots of luggage in the

carriage, as they are very roomy; so he put on the fellow's clothes, opened his boxes, read up his papers, and had everything put, and slipped into the fellow's shoes, and took his name and fortune, and passed entirely unquestioned and scot free.'

'That certainly is a strange story! But how could he pass himself off? They must have been quite different in appearance?'

'So they were—though both dark, and both of a height and age. The tea-planter had led a lonely life in Assam for years, had few friends, and when they heard he had got a fortune, and gone home, they were not surprised. Why should they be? And Paske had one little girl. Hullo! I have let slip a name,' becoming very red. 'So much for my long tongue, and for you pressing me to tell stories. I doubt but mischief will come of this! Why the deuce could I not be prudent? Mind you, you are as though you had never heard? Do you hear me?'

'Of course I do. I am deaf. You have told me nothing. You may be quite comfortable.'

'Oh, may I? Well, you will make me still more comfortable if you will tell me something. I am off to Australia in about three weeks at latest, in the *Oriental*, for good and all. I am going to cut this played-out old country; and I want to take a wife back to Melbourne. I am a rich man. I shall take twelve thousand pounds in hard cash with me. What do you say, Sara; will you be Mrs. Horne?'

He seemed to have no doubt of her reply, as he smiled at her encouragingly.

'I—I—am very much obliged,' she stammered.

'Of course you are. It's a great rise for you from service. You will be a real lady, and keep your own maid. Still you are a very handsome girl, and look as if you might be a duchess. So that's all settled. I can only give you short notice, you see, and you had better give warning at The Hermitage, and we will get the license.'

'But stop, Mr. Horne, I have not said yes, and I must have time to make up my mind. You will have to give me a week to think over it at the very least,' said Sara, nervously.

'Nonsense! What can you have to make up your own mind about?'

'About going to Australia, and spending the rest of my life there. I don't think I should like it. Now, if you were going to stay at home it would be another thing. I am very fond of England!'

'Yes, but I am not going to stay at home. I am bound to sail in three weeks' time for Melbourne. Let me write up, and take a double first-class passage. Come now! don't be silly! don't say no!'

'But surely this notion of going to Australia is very sudden, and something quite new!' said Sara.

'No; it's been in my head this long time. I've not been home for nine years, and I have a sort of longing to sniff the smell of the blue gum-trees, and eat a damper once more, and to ride a free-going water!'

'I daresay I can make you a damper here. Is it not only flour and water?'

'I envy anyone not born out there, to turn out the real thing; and talking of eating, let us go to the hotel now and have a good lunch, and afterwards we will go up to the Castle on Shakespeare's Cliff, whichever you like!'

As they rose to go he said,—
'There's that chap—that Hyde!—walking past with another officer. He has been up and down, and up and down, keeping his eye on us. I wonder what he wants? I don't know him save by sight, and neither do you!'

To this remark Sara made no reply; but followed her companion to an adjacent hotel, where he ordered 'a tip-top luncheon,' as he expressed it—oysters, grouse, champagne—the best they had in the house. Rattling his loose silver in his pocket, and issuing his wishes with his hat on the back of his head, luncheon



[THE EDGE OF THE CLIFF GAVE WAY, AND, WITH A FEARFUL SHOUT, MR. HORNE FELL OVER!]

was soon served, and proved to be excellent. As Sara only drank water, and refused many pressing offers of champagne, therefore Mr. Horne was obliged to drink a whole bottle to himself, and it was quite as much as was good for him.

He was exceedingly loud and talkative as he strolled up towards Shakespeare's Cliff, pausing for breath every now and then, and to survey the opposite white coast of France.

He was in the act of declaiming about his native land with both arms outstretched when the foreign land he stood upon—treacherous alien soil!—suddenly gave way beneath his feet. He had been walking perilously near the edge, and, with a fearful shout, he went over.

A small, jutting-out piece of chalk arrested his immediate descent about six feet down; and there, with his nails buried into the bank, the wretched man clung between sky and sea, no one in sight but Sara and a little boy, and the ignorant crowds pacing the streets, pier, and parade below.

He glanced up at Sara with a white face, on which was written a passion of fear and despair, and she looked back at him rigid with horror, with starting eyes and panting breath; but fear had not paralysed her.

She screamed to a coastguard far away. She stripped off the skirt of her dress in an instant, and flung part of it to the wretched man over the cliff, whilst she and the boy held the other. They lay flat down at the very brink, and clutched it with all their might, for the lump of chalk was gradually giving way, and nothing could save him from a horrible death but their united exertions. Alas! he was heavy; he weighed fourteen stone. He was more than they could support.

The coastguard, running up, was just in time to see the skirt slip from their hands; and the unfortunate man, with a tinkling of pebbles, and a dull roar of gravel, slide down the cliff. That fall at the bottom. Ugh! how it sounded! It was sickening.

The place at which Mr. Horne went over was not from the summit of the cliff, from which so many have lost their lives, but further on, where the cliff is lower. The dress and the gradual drop had broken his fall, and there a quarter of an hour later he was picked up. He was still alive, though quite unconscious. He was carried to the hotel from which he had recently issued in such excellent health and spirits. A surgeon was at once on the spot, a nurse sent for. Sara gave his name and address, and said that all expenses would be liberally paid by Mr. Paske of The Hermitage, Walmer.

Mr. Paske, she told herself, would be only too well pleased to get rid of him so cheaply, and would spare no expense for his doctor, nurse, and funeral. Yes, the surgeon had told her that he believed the injured man had fractured his spine. It would not be a painful ending, but it was only a question of a few days; but friends had best be told. And she knew them. Yes, if she could do nothing else for him, she would go over to Walmer, and inform Mr. Paske without delay.

"Yes," said the surgeon. "You have no time to lose. The sooner his friends come, and his worldly affairs are settled, the better. He will probably be conscious to-morrow. There will be an inquiry, of course, about the accident, and you will have to give evidence, but that won't be for a few days, probably not until the inquest is held."

"The inquest!" She shuddered.

Sara found Roger Hyde waiting outside the hotel, when she left it. She was very white and shaken, and seemed as one dazed. Never before in her life had she been brought face to face with tragedy of this sort, tragedy and death.

"It has been a bad business," said Roger, as he joined her. "Is there any chance for him?"

"Not the slightest," she answered. "When

I think of it all—the sudden slip, the giving way of the turf, his awful cry, his face, and our struggle to save him—I feel quite sick and giddy," and she leant against a wall.

"I have no doubt you do. Come into this confectioner's, and have some wine or coffee." "No, I must go back at once. I have to tell the news to Mr. Paske."

"And good news it will be to him, I fancy! I shall go with you," hailing a passing fly.

"What, to The Hermitage?"

"No, to Walmer. You don't look fit to travel by yourself, and you shan't travel all that way alone."

She certainly did not look fit for much, although she had replaced the skirt of her dress, and was outwardly, neat and tidy as usual. Her voice shook, and her hand trembled, as if she had the palsy.

"Very well, you shall come to Walmer station. I shall want to husband all my strength and all my wits for what is coming."

"And what is that?"

"A life-and-death struggle between Mr. Paske and me, for the contents of the portfolio. I mean to have them at any cost, and so, I expect, does he."

"How are you going to set about getting them? Cannot I do something?" said Roger, eagerly. "I am ashamed to be idle. Cannot I tackle Paske?"

"I think not; but, of course, I will let you know if you can. I shall return here to Dover, and stay with Mr. Horne till the last. He is sure to ask for me. He proposed for me to-day, and wanted me to go out with him to Melbourne in three weeks' time."

"Poor beggar, he will never see Melbourne again," said Roger, emphatically.

"No, they think his spine is injured, and he can't live more than a few days. If you saw where he went down you would wonder he was alive now."

(To be continued.)



["BOTHER THE DORCAS MEETING!"] SAID RUPERT. "YOU MIGHT SPARE A FEW FIVE MINUTES."

NOVELLETTE.]

THE OCEAN OF LIFE.

CHAPTER I.

"What are you doing here?"

The voice was harsh, the tone uncomprising, and the figure cowering in the darkest shadows of the inner porch abrank still further from the questioner. But he was not to be thwarted.

"What are you doing here?" he questioned again, and bending forward touched her with authoritative finger. "You had best answer me quickly and truthfully."

A white, flower-like face, with dark, desperate eyes was lifted to meet the clergyman's stern regard. It was the face of a girl not more than seventeen, but it already bore the impress of sorrow and want.

"I wanted to stay here to-night," said a low, sweet voice. "I am afraid of the dreadful streets."

"But the clerk is making fast all the doors. You would have been locked in here until the morning had I not discovered you."

"I should not have been afraid," she answered, wearily. "This is God's house; surely I am safe here!"

The Reverend Kennedy listened frowningly. Then he said,—

"Where is your home?"

"I have no home."

"But you have friends?"

"Not one in the world. I buried my father yesterday," and here the sweet voice faltered and broke, the dusky eyes grew heavy with tears she would not shed. "He was ill so long that all our savings went, and so this morning the landlady told me I must leave."

"What was your father before his illness?"

"A clerk in the city," the girl answered.

And now she rose and faced her questioner, and he saw she was very slight—just a mere slip of a girl, all unfitted to battle with a cruel and wicked world. But he had been so often deceived by candidates for charity that his naturally suspicious nature had grown more and more distrustful with each passing year; and his voice was not a whit less harsh when he bade her tell him where she had last lived, and what guarantee she could give of her respectability. But the poor child was too miserable, too desolate, to resent his manner or his questions, and answered meekly enough. The clergyman stood silent and thoughtful a moment, then he said,—

"Of course, your story may be true, and if so you are to be pitied; but before I can give you any material assistance I must satisfy myself of your integrity. But our church commands us to extend charity to all; so, for to-night at least, I will take you to my own home; in the morning Mrs. Kennedy will know what to do with you. Come."

The clerk advanced jingling his keys, and glancing curiously at the slim, black-robed figure.

"I am going now, Sterne," said Mr. Kennedy.

"Have you made all fast?"

"Yes sir."

"Very well. Oh, Sterne, I had forgotten I have a parochial meeting to attend to-morrow, so I must ask you to go to number five Charles-street, Torrington-road, and make inquiries there about this young person. What is your name?"

"Kitty Romaine."

"She states she is an orphan of respectable birth, reduced to this strait by misfortune. Ascertain if these statements are correct."

"Yes, sir," then he added quickly, as if fearful of giving offence, "my daughter Jane has gone to fresh service, sir, and this poor girl can have her bed, if you care to give her into the wife's charge."

"No, Sterne, no," ungraciously. "I prefer she should remain for the present under my

own special espionage. Good-night. Come, girl."

She followed slowly and apathetically, hardly conscious of her protector's ungracious manner, his frowning suspicious regard; hardly wondering what would be the next event in her sad young life. And presently they came to a large gloomy-looking house, to which they were admitted by a severely respectable man-servant, of whom Mr. Kennedy asked,—

"Where is your mistress?"

"In the library, sir."

Bidding Kitty follow him, he led the way to a large and gloomy looking room where a lady sat writing.

"Eunice," he said, with no softening of his harsh voice, "I have brought you a *protégée*."

Mrs. Kennedy looked up quickly, and the sweet, somewhat sad face grew very pitiful as she met the appealing glance of those dark brown eyes. But she did not venture to speak, until her husband added,—

"She is without friends, without home, but claims to be respectable. Give her a bed to-night. In the morning I shall know what to do with her."

"Poor child!" said Mrs. Kennedy, in a gentle voice, "so young, and so friendless. Tell me your name, my dear?"

"Eunice, how often am I to remonstrate with you on your ill advised sentimentality? Give the girl into Martha's care. There is nothing you can do to-night."

"Martha is not very well, Dunstan. I will attend to her myself; and afraid lest her husband should forbid even this act of kindness, she hurried Kitty away to a little spare chamber at the top of the house. There her first act was to force the poor wail into an easy chair, unfasten the thin jacket she wore, and remove the cheap crape hat which hid the masses of dusky hair.

"My dear," she said, "have you eaten anything to-day?"

Kitty shook her head; she could not speak,

for this unusual kindness choked her utterance; and she was faint, too, with long fasting and woe.

With a compassionate look Mrs. Kennedy hurried out, to return in a short while with some ham sandwiches and a cup of fragrant coffee (the strongest beverage allowed in that house).

"Eat and drink first," she said, "then, if you like, you may tell me about yourself." And whilst Kitty discussed the welcome food she pretended to busy herself with some memoranda she drew from her pocket. Refreshed and strengthened, the girl put aside her plate, and waited for her benefactress to speak.

"How old are you, Kitty?" was the first question.

"Just seventeen, madam; father died on my birthday."

"Poor child! Was he ill long? Will it do you good to tell me all your sorrowful story? If so, do not hesitate to confide in me. I am old enough to be your mother; and I do not ask out of vulgar curiosity."

"Oh, I know! I know! You are most good to me, and I would like you to feel I am really what I say I am. There isn't much to tell. It is a common story. Mine is a common lot, but that does not make it easier for me to bear. My mother and father married when they were very young—mother was a governess and father a clerk in the city, taking a good salary. They never had any other child but me, and so I was not obliged to learn any trade. I wish now I had; but they educated me well, and guarded me so carefully that I never knew a want or a trouble till mother died four years ago. I think her death broke my father's heart. He was never the same again; and brooding over his trouble undermined his strength; so that when, nine months ago, he took a severe chill, the doctors all said it would be fatal. Oh, madam! I watched him fading day by day, and tried to believe I was mistaken, but could not. He grew weaker and weaker—less and less able to help himself. Then his place in the office was filled up, and we lived wholly upon his savings. How quickly they went, although they had taken so long to hoard! And I saw nothing but starvation before us, when we had come to the end of them, for in all the world we had not a single relative or friend."

"Thank Heaven! he never lived to know want. Just a week ago to-day he died. Oh! my heart, he died, and I was all alone. There was just enough money left to bury him and pay the rent; and when I had settled those claims the landlady came to me and said, knowing I was unable to keep the rooms she had let them, and would be glad if I would vacate them at once. Heartbrokenly I came away, and after wandering about all day I stole into St. Sepulchre's Church, thinking I would sleep there to-night, and in the morning I would try for work. Mrs. Creeper, the landlady, allowed me to leave my box behind, as I could not carry it with me. She said she really ought to claim my things, because of the trouble the funeral had been."

"She is a rapacious woman," Mrs. Kennedy said sharply, "but she is not entirely mistress of the situation. To-morrow, Kitty, we will see what can be done for you. Now go to bed and try to rest. Good-night, Heaven bless you, child." And allowing Kitty no time for reply she hurried away, lest Mr. Kennedy should comment on her long absence. And Kitty, worn out by her sorrow, and the weary wanderings of the day, soon fell fast asleep.

Danstan Kennedy, Vicar of St. Sepulchre's, was not a popular man.

He worked indefatigably in the parish, giving his time and energy without stint; he organised a reading club and a night-class, gave large sums to the poor, and yet he was not popular. Those who most esteemed him neither liked nor understood him, and wondered how so pretty and kindly a woman as Mrs. Kennedy could have married such an austere man.

He was strictly evangelical in principle,

and the services at St. Sepulchre's were very dreary indeed, the Vicar refusing to permit more singing than was absolutely necessary. The psalms were read in the form of a duet between parson and people. The hymns were dreary compositions, drearily droned; and the sermons were very long, and generally of a terrifying nature.

There was small wonder that the congregation dwindled down to a mere handful of worshippers, who attended principally through long habit or attachment to the church itself. And Danstan Kennedy never strove to conciliate a single member of his flock; ungracious, and ungainly in manner and appearance, making duty his god, he held austere on his way.

In his own house he reigned supreme. It was he who regulated the arrangement of the rooms, who sternly forbade the introduction of the dainty ornaments and draperies in which his wife's heart delighted; he called them "vanities," and inveighed against them fiercely; and she was too meek to resist. He did many a good deed, but he was hardly ever thanked—his manner of doing a kindness precluded that. And it was to this man's house Kitty had come—warm-hearted, little Kitty Romayne, who, until her father's death, had never known a harsh word or look.

She was roused early in the morning by a neat, middle-aged maid, who said—

"You'd better dress quickly as the parson-bell will ring soon and the master never excuses us from prayers; if you make haste I'll wait for you."

Kitty needed no second bidding. Dressing with hasty fingers, she soon declared herself ready, and Martha led the way to the breakfast-room where the others were already assembled. Mrs. Kennedy looked up with a timid smile of welcome, but her husband did not lift his eyes from the heavy Bible except when he asked, "Where is Mr. Rupert?" and a servant volunteered the information, "He has not left his room yet, sir."

Without waiting Mr. Kennedy began the morning's devotions, and just in the middle of the second chapter the door opened quietly, and a handsome young fellow slipped into his place beside Mrs. Kennedy. She gave him a reproachful look, which he answered with a smile, and then sat back and listened, with closed eyes, to the harsh voices reading divine words of love and comfort. Then followed the prayers; and they being ended, Kitty prepared to leave the room with the servants, but the clergyman's voice recalled her.

"Kitty Romayne, until I have proved you what you claim to be, I request you to take your meals in the room set apart for you. You may go to it now."

The pale young face flashed, the lips quivered, and the dark eyes glanced a little indignantly at him as he said, "Sir, you have been very good to me, but if you accuse me of being other than I seem, let me go away now."

"I neither accuse nor condemn," coldly, "and if you left here, where would you go?"

"I do not know," wearily, "but there is always the river."

"I will talk to you later on," sternly. "Your life is not your own. Go back to your room." And as she escaped through the open door she was conscious of the kindly regard of the young fellow she had heard called Mr. Rupert.

Upstairs she went, and flinging herself on her knees beside her bed, sobbed wildly—

"Oh father! I father loathe back to your little daughter; I cannot bear suspicion—I cannot bear life here; and she wept without restraint.

She did not see Mrs. Kennedy again that morning. The lady had been strictly forbidden to hold any intercourse with the poor little wail until she had been proved free from soil or smirch; for Danstan Kennedy quite believed in making the gulf between the sheep and the goats as wide as possible. So the lady sat in the breakfast-room sewing rough flannels that her soul abhorred, and listening to the pleasant voices of her husband's handsome young nephew.

"Who is uncle's new protégé? She is very pretty, and looks quite a lady."

"Poor child! she is an orphan, and her story is a sad one. I hope Danstan will do the best he can for her."

"He need not speak to her as though she were less good than she looks."

"My dear, he has had much to render him suspicious. You never credit him with his true worth and goodness. You do not understand him."

Rupert said nothing. He was too genuinely fond of his aunt to disagree her by harsh criticisms on Mr. Kennedy; but he thought Kitty Romayne was not likely to receive much kindness or consideration from the austere clergyman.

In the afternoon Kitty was once more summoned to her benefactor's presence. No kindly smile lit up the heavy frowning face as she entered, and there was no softer note in the stern voice as he said—

"I find your story is quite correct, and am pleased to know I have not been imposed upon. If you are willing to remain here, and lead a godly and industrious life, I have given Mrs. Kennedy permission to receive you into her service. Lately her sight has been failing; and as I understand you are capable of doing fine sewing, and conducting her correspondence for her, there is no reason why you should not prove a suitable person, if you are so inclined. Mrs. Kennedy herself will deal with you in the matter of wages. You may go now."

She escaped gladly from his most ungracious presence, and went up to her own room. Thankful as she was for this respite from starvation and death, she yet thought with horror of a life spent in this gloomy house, with no one to love her, or speak comfortingly to her—she whose whole life until now had been sheltered from hardship or harshness.

CHAPTER II.

"Miss KITTY, don't you ever cease working?"

"I am very busy this morning. Mrs. Kennedy wants these garments finished to-day. You know the Dorcas meeting is to-morrow."

"Bother the Dorcas meeting! You might spare a fellow five minutes."

A hot flush mounted the girl's pale face, and she glanced nervously at the door, then said, in a very low voice—

"Mr. Rupert, I wish you would go away."

"Why?" she young man asked, calmly, contemplating the sewer.

"Mr. Kennedy would be angry to find you here."

"I don't see why he should. He can't expect me to pore all day over my books; or if he does he will be grievously disappointed. Though I hope to take a good degree I am not altogether a bookworm; and you know, Miss Kitty, there is a time to work and a time to play."

"You are wilfully misunderstanding me," she said, indignantly. "You know as well as I that our relative positions do not warrant any intercourse between us. You are the son of a gentleman, I the orphan of a poor clerk, and your aunt's attendant."

"You should not talk so, Kitty. You are as much a lady as Aunt Eunice, and a great favourite with her. It is only stupid pride that makes you hold me at arm's length, and it isn't worthy you."

The pale young face flashed more hotly than before.

"I am not proud, neither am I forgetful of my position in this house, or the cruel remarks your conduct will subject me to. You forget what is due to me!"

The fair, handsome face grew white and stern.

"I will give you no cause to say that again," he remarked, and went out of the room, leaving Kitty a prey to contending emotions. She had been at the Vicarage a fortnight

and was almost reconciled to her new position. For Mrs. Kennedy treated her with every kindness, and talked with her as an equal.

With the Vicar it was different. For all his rigid Christianity he laid down hard-and-fast rules between classes and orders, and esteemed it a kindness to let none with whom he came in contact forget his or her position.

He made Kitty feel her dependent position in a score of ways, one of which was that he always addressed her by her Christian name, although, indeed, she occupied the post of amanuensis to his wife. But for that lady's remonstrances he would have made her consort with the servants, and take her meals with them; but in this one thing his wife managed to oppose him firmly.

"I want my secretary to remain a lady," she said. "I cannot afford to have her nice perceptions blunted, or her manners coarsened by daily contact with lower minds."

So Kitty's meals were taken alone, and all those hours not filled by labour were spent by her in dreary solitude. It often happened that, when she sat with Mrs. Kennedy, Rupert would saunter in and spend a whole morning with them; and although Kitty was always very silent, she liked listening to the gay, young voice, and now and again to look at the bright fair face of the Vicar's nephew.

He was always kind to her, and now perhaps he had offended him beyond forgiveness, and with that thought her head drooped low.

It was all very well to tell herself she had acted with propriety, that she could not have done otherwise. Such reflections failed to comfort the poor desolate, little heart, yearning so passionately for love.

"I have made him angry," she thought again and again, "and his anger is very hard to bear; but what else could I do? He and I have nothing in common. He is a gentleman, I am not, without friends and without home. Mr. Kennedy will be careful not to let me forget that."

He had rescued her from starvation and death, but she could not feel grateful to him. Her life was so dreary, so heavy, she often wished he had left her in the church porch, where she must have frozen to death on that dreadful night when she found herself all alone in the world, hopeless and penniless.

"I should soon have been at rest," she said, with a little low sob. "I should have never known another care or sorrow. Oh, why did I not die then? Before I learned to—to love Rupert to the increase of my woes?"

Yes, it had even come to that with poor little Kitty Romaine; and, perhaps, there was small wonder that it should be so. This handsome, bright-faced young fellow, with his winning ways and tender smile, had been so uniformly kind and gentle with her; had never, by word or look, reminded her of the gulf that yawned between them.

His father, Admiral Kennedy had been called to the sick bed of a friend; so that Rupert, coming from Oxford, found the old house deserted save by the servants, and had taken up his quarters with the Reverend and Mrs. Kennedy.

He was touched by Kitty's story, her pale, sorrowful young face and sad eyes, and would have done much to make her life a little brighter, a little happier, although he knew any interference on his part would be sternly rebuffed by his uncle.

Still he thought of her a great deal more than was wise or well; and as he sat poring over his books her face would rise between them and him, and he would almost fancy he heard the low notes of her sweet young voice. He was more hurt than he cared to acknowledge by her words.

"You forget what is due to me." They seemed to imply that he had not always behaved towards her as a gentleman, and she hot blood flooded his face as he said,—

"By Heaven, she is the first to hint that I am a cad," and he left the house in no very pleasant frame of mind. But he was of too

genial and happy a disposition long to remember any offence; and the next afternoon he strolled into Mrs. Kennedy's favourite room, where she and Kitty sat sewing.

"You are just in time, Rupert!" said the former. "We were getting quite drowsy over this interminable stitching; but it is wanted for some poor person in whom your uncle has an interest. Suppose you sit down and read to us—always provided you have nothing better to do?"

"I shall be only too happy to stay, aunt! What shall I read?"

"Oh, let Kitty choose; she has such good taste," but Kitty objected.

And after turning over a quantity of books in a half-discontented, dismayed fashion, Rupert said boyishly,—

"Oh, look here! I can't read any of this awful twaddle. I'll run and get something you will like. I suppose you don't read Swinburne, aunt?"

"I! Oh no. Your uncle does not approve profane poetry."

Mustering something the reverse of complimentary to Mr. Kennedy Rupert hurried away, to return presently with an aesthetically-bound volume, which he opened at once, and began to read that marvellous poem, "The Triumph of Time." He read well, and his voice was musical and mellow, and right away from the opening verse,—

"Before our lives divide for ever,
While time is with us and hands are free,
(Time swift to fasten and swift to sever
Hand from hand as we stand by the sea).
I will say no word that a man might say,
Whose whole life's love goes down in a day,"

to the closing lines, neither listener spoke. They hardly, indeed, seemed to breathe; and Kitty, all unconsciously allowing her work to fall upon her lap, sat with her large dark eyes fixed upon his face, drinking in every word of that most exquisite poem. She had never heard anything like this; and when it was ended, she gave a deep sigh, whether of pleasure or pain she could scarcely tell.

Rupert was well-pleased with the effect it had produced upon her and not at all sorry that before his aunt's praise of it had ended she was summoned to interview a poor woman in the adjoining room. He was not the sort of fellow "to let the grass grow under his feet," so he drew a little nearer, and bending solicitously over the girl, said,—

"I want you to prove you are not angry with me."

"Angry, Mr. Rupert? I hardly understand you."

"Well, you know you gave me that impression yesterday. You said I forgot what was due to you, and more in the same strain, and I have been thinking over it ever since. Miss Kitty, I should like to know you don't believe so poorly of me as that; for upon my honour I see no difference between you and any other lady (only that you are prettier), and I want very much to be your friend in every way."

"You are very good," she faltered, "but surely you must see friendship between us is impossible?"

"That is just what I can't see. Why should it be? Kitty, don't you trust me?"

"Yes," faintly, because the glamour of his strong, bright presence was upon her. "I know that you are an honest gentleman, but that does not alter my position towards you. I am a poor girl, and your aunt's servant."

"Why do you talk like that? You are her equal in refinement, her superior in beauty and mind."

"Do you forget," wildly, "how your uncle found me?"

"No; and I wish I had been in his place. But, there, I will say no more that may offend you, you incorrigibly obstinate young lady. Only tell me I am forgiven."

"If there ever was anything to forgive, I forgave you before you asked it."

"And you will prove this by letting me

give you some small pleasure. Now, don't say so. It is really most innocent, and not worth any fuss or thanks. I have some books I am sure you would like to read. May I bring some down for you? I will leave them here in the recess, and you can take them to your room when you have an opportunity."

"You are most good, and I shall be glad to avail myself of your offer."

That evening, before she went upstairs, she had occasion to go into the breakfast-room, and there she found three volumes waiting for her. Kingsley's "Hypatia," Helen Mather's "Cherry Ripe," and Rossetti's "Poems."

With a thankful heart she carried them to her room. How good he was to her! She, who had nothing to give him in exchange for all his kindness—nothing but all the love of her innocent young heart. Inside "Hypatia" she found a little note addressed to herself.

"DEAR MISS KITTY,—

"To please me read this first, and do not hurry to return the volumes, although I have more for you when these are finished. I hope you will 'read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them' to your own pleasure, as they are all favourites with me. "R. K."

She kissed the words he had written, and looked the note away with her few small treasures—a lock of her mother's hair, a posy ring her father had given her long ago, and a few letters he had written her when he had been compelled by business to leave home for a short time.

The days slipped by with lightning speed to Rupert, bringing nearer and nearer the time of his return to Oxford; and, for the first time since he entered college, he looked forward to it with dread.

How to go and leave Kitty—his Kitty—to the mercy of Dunstan Kennedy, to her un congenial, weary life, was the question agitating him.

His father, Admiral Kennedy, was as opposite as light is to darkness to his uncle; but Rupert well knew the bluff old sailor would never consent to an engagement between his only son and a poor little wail of no standing or birth.

What should he do? His father was dear to him, but not so dear as Kitty, and he could not give her up. "There is nothing for it but patience," he thought, "I must keep my own counsel for awhile, until I see the way clear to confess all to the governor. I wish I had chosen any profession but the medical. It will be such a precious time before I can earn enough to keep myself, let alone a wife!"

Yet knowing this, he did not intend returning to Oxford without speaking to Kitty; and the day before his departure he found his opportunity.

Mr. Kennedy was attending a vestry meeting, his wife was driving with a friend, and Kitty sat alone in the breakfast room engaged in writing letters.

She looked shyly up as he entered, and blushed slightly.

"Are you very busy, Miss Kitty?" he asked, sauntering to the fireside, from which post he got a very good view of her pretty pale face.

"Is there anything I can do for you, Mr. Rupert? I can spare ten minutes."

"I want to talk to you," he answered, a little awkwardly. "Do you know when I am returning to Oxford?"

"Mrs. Kennedy said on Saturday, I believe," Kitty murmured, looking intently down at her desk. "You will be glad to go; this place is dull for you!"

"I have not found it so," gravely; "and I am sorry that only three days of my vacation remain to me. You have made it very pleasant to me."

"I! Oh, Mr. Rupert!"

"Yes you, Kitty. You are such a fresh, sweet piece of life in this place I can't tell you how I shall miss you. I wonder if you care

at all about my going; or if you are too indifferent to me to feel either glad or sorry."

As he watched her, the slow tide of colour crept over throat and cheek to die as slowly away, leaving her paler than before.

"Are you sorry, Kitty?" he persisted, and trembling a little, despite her utmost efforts to keep quiet, she said, in a very low voice,—

"I am sorry; you have been always so kind to me. I—I shall miss you!"

"Thank you, I am glad to hear you say that; and you may believe that I shall see you again as soon as I may; but my next vac. I must spend with my father. I take my degree next June, and then shall come up here to walk one of the hospitals, so we shall often meet then. You will not forget me?"

"No;" and she thought that she would never forget while life lasted.

"Will you write to me?" he asked, coming a little nearer to her.

"Oh! no, no! I must not, I dare not!" she cried, tremulously.

"But why? You don't know how I should prize over so little a line from you. I shall be very lonely at Oxford, and beset, too, by doubts that you have forgotten or will forget me. Now, if you would write me now and then you could not do that. I should sometimes dwell in your memory. Kitty, won't you give me the pleasure I ask?"

She had risen and stood now twisting her fingers together in greatest agitation. Her eyes were downcast, her lips tremulous; and he seeing his advantage went nearer yet, and with gentle forced possession himself of her small, white hands.

"Do not send me away comfortless."

"It is wrong. I am very much afraid it is wrong; but I will write sometimes, not often."

"How shall I thank you? You have made me very happy," and then he paused, looking ardently down upon her.

She was so sweet, so sad, so terribly alone in the world that his heart ached for her. She was so dear to him, and he so young and impetuous, that all in a moment he had her fast and close in his arms, and was kissing life and colour into her pale face.

"Kitty, I love you! I love you!" he cried, and she, lifting star-like eyes to his answered,—

"And I you; but oh! what will be the end for me?"

He held her fast.

"You shall be my dear and honoured wife."

"Oh! that will never, never be! Remember your father. What would he say if he knew the truth?"

CHAPTER III.

"He pleased himself when he chose his wife, he would hardly refuse his son a like privilege!" But then his honest nature reasserted itself, and he said, very gravely and tenderly,—

"My darling Kitty, I am afraid he will not be pleased at first; but he is so generous and warm-hearted that we shall have very little difficulty in winning him over to our way of thinking. So keep a brave spirit, dearest, and trust me in and through all. You do trust me?" earnestly.

"Indeed—Indeed I do; only—only, Rupert, there is such a terrible difference between us, and I am afraid nothing will ever be right with me any more. Oh, my dear! for all your love, for all the honour you have paid me, I thank you with a full and grateful heart; but never, never will I drag you down to my poor level; give you the cup of poverty to drink, the bitter bread of dependence to eat. If it is for your good you should marry me (and, oh! I dare not think that). I hope that some day, when your love has stood the test of absence and opposition, we may come together. But if it is for evil, then night and day, on my knees, I will pray Heaven this union may never be. You are more than life itself

to me. I will never hurt you," and then she burst into heavy sobs, which he vainly tried to check. "Let me be—just a moment," she pleaded. "I shall be stronger soon," and he obliquely respected her entreaty.

In a little while she had grown calm enough to listen to him.

"Kitty, dear, you must not begin your engagement with doubts of my loyalty or fears of the future. We are both so young we can afford to wait a year or two if necessary, and I am not a fellow lightly to change; and should my father remain obdurate, that will not alter my fixed resolve; for should not a man leave father and mother and cleave to his wife? Only, of course, we should have to wait longer before we could marry. And now one thing more. In June I take my degree; until then I should wish to keep our engagement secret, because I am sure any rupture between my father and myself must materially lessen my chances of passing well. Am I asking too much of you, sweetheart?"

"How can you ask too much—you who are giving me all? Let everything be as you wish, dear Rupert, and it will be well."

Her earnest love, her simple faith in him touched him beyond all words. He bent his bright young face upon the glory of her dark tresses, and in his heart he prayed "Heaven make me worthy of her!"

His great love made him humble as a little child. His reverence for her would keep him pure and unswayed amongst all the temptations with which an university town is rife; and nothing would ever shake his great faith in her.

"As soon as term ends I shall run up to town on some purely personal business, and then, of course, I shall see you. Then I shall go down to Penarvon (our place) and make a clean breast of it all to the governor. Until then I am resolved to look on the bright side of affairs and do you, my Kitty, try to do the same."

"I—I shall not see you for five months!" she whispered, brokenly.

"I am afraid not; but we shall both be so busy that the time will soon pass, and we shall have each other's letters for consolation. Haven't you a photo of yourself, Kitty?"

"No."

"Well, you must get one as quickly as possible, and send on to me. Mine (if you care to have it)—this slyly—" you shall have before—I go. But as you value our future happiness you will not let either Mr. or Mrs. Kennedy guess the truth. She would be our friend if she dared, but my uncle rules her with a rod of iron."

"I will be very careful; and now, Rupert, I think you had best leave me. He will be returning soon, and he is so suspicious."

"But I must see you alone again before I go. Promise me I shall?"

"Do you think I should deny myself that pleasure unless compelled?" she asked, with the first gleam of mischief he had ever seen in her.

"You little darling! So it is a pleasure to have me with you? Say it again and again."

"No Rupert, I must not foster your natural coyness." Then with a sudden change of manner. "Go now, dear love; I want to be alone. I want to think over this great and blessed change in my life, to realise how good Heaven is to me. Oh Rupert! Rupert! my gladness is too great to last."

What answer he would have made to that was never known, for the hall door opened with a clang, and, much against his will, Rupert was forced to take a hasty farewell of his little sweetheart. On the staircase he met Mr. Kennedy.

"Are you going out?" he asked.

"Not if you have any work for me, uncle. You look tired!"

"The true servant does not think of fatigue whilst his master has need of him," coldly; "but I should be glad if you would help me with these parochial accounts. I am not so clever at figures as I could wish."

So together uncle and nephew entered the study, and until the dinner bell rang busied themselves with the great pile of papers the clergyman had brought home with him.

The young lovers had no further chance of speech in all the three days that followed Rupert's declaration, and Kitty was beginning to think that no word of farewell would pass between them.

It was Saturday morning, and Rupert's belongings were already in the hall. The carriage containing his aunt and uncle waited him, when he burst into her presence.

"I haven't a moment to spare Kitty, darling, but I couldn't go without a good-bye. Here is my portrait, and mind you send me yours quickly. I will write you to-morrow. As you open the letter-bag there will be no danger of discovery. Little sweetheart, little wife, good-bye, good-bye!"

"Good-bye, and Heaven bless you and keep you always," and then followed one quick passionate embrace, and—he was gone. Kitty sank down upon a couch, and hiding her face in her hands gave herself up to bitter tears.

What should she do now that he was gone? All the light and happiness seemed flown, and her heart ached with its intolerable sense of desolation. How should she bear to live through five long months without the sound of his voice or the touch of his hand? The assurance of his deep and earnest love? Then suddenly she rose.

"I am a coward and ungrateful," she said, aloud, "but I will be so no more. I have much to learn before I am a fitting helpmate for him. Heaven grant me strength and will to make myself worthy him."

The days that followed were very heavy ones to Kitty; but she had much to do, and could not brood over her troubles as a less occupied girl might have done. Then she had Rupert's letters to comfort her; and but for the fear of the Admiral's anger when he learned all she would have been happy, or as happy as she could be separated from her lover.

She grew daily in favour with Mrs. Kennedy, but she never had been, and never would be, a favourite with her austere patron.

Perhaps she was too pretty and refined; perhaps there was something in the expression of her clear, soft eyes which seemed to reproach him whenever he gave utterance to some especially hard judgment, or expounded some cruel doctrine to his own satisfaction. However, that may be, Danstan Kennedy did not like Kitty, and half regretted taking her into his house.

The weeks and months went by, and Kitty counted the days which must elapse before Rupert came to her again. In March he travelled with the Admiral to Penarvon, where his vacation was spent; and from which place he wrote long and loving letters to his little sweetheart.

In April he returned once more to Oxford, and applied himself heart and soul to his studies. At last came degree day, and the Admiral had gone to Oxford to be present at his son's triumph.

He was very proud of this fair-faced, honest young fellow; and when he found how good a degree he had obtained he was almost ready to promise him any gift he should ask.

Rupert felt inclined then to tell him all about Kitty; but a troop of friends swooped down upon him with congratulations, and insisted upon carrying him and the Admiral to a dainty luncheon, provided by one of the number. After this there were calls to make and visitors to receive, so that the day wore by without offering an opportunity to plead his own and Kitty's cause. At night the Admiral said,—

"Oh, Rupert, I expect you can be ready to start with me to-morrow for Peckerton? I promised Maeston we would spend next week with him. He has a nice place, and an extremely pretty daughter," and he looked so cunningly at Rupert that he guessed his

father would not object to receive Miss Maston into his family.

This was complicating affairs with a vengeance; but he answered, quietly,—

"I shall be ready to follow you in two days, father; but I have a little business to see after first in town. So, with your permission, I will run up to my uncle's to-morrow."

"Can't your business wait, Ra? No? Well, then, I'll be off to Peckerton by an early train, and you can follow at your leisure. My boy, you will be quite the lion of the place. I am proud of you, Ra; more proud than I can tell. You have acquitted yourself so honourably."

So the next day the Admiral went to Peckerton, and Rupert hurried to town. To his great delight, he heard on his arrival at the vicarage that his aunt was luncheon with a neighbouring vicarage, and his uncle was also out. But Miss Romaine was in the breakfast-room; and so to the breakfast-room he went.

Kitty had heard and recognised his voice, it's step; and now she stood, all flushed and trembling, one hand resting on the table, waiting for his entrance.

There was such love, such rapture in her eyes as they met his, that he held out his arms to her, saying,—

"Kitty, my little darling Kitty!" and with a low cry she ran forward to be caught in his strong and tender embrace.

"And so you are glad to see me, little one!" he asked, after the first greetings had passed.

"Glad! Oh, Rupert, I have longed and prayed for this hour with all my heart. And now tell me of your success, for, of course, you are successful?"

"What faith you have in me, sweetheart; just in this instance I deserve it. I have taken an excellent degree. These last six months I've worked like a Turk—all for you, my darling—and I have my reward. To-morrow I am to join my father at Peckerton, and then I shall tell him all, and ask him how soon he will be ready to receive his little daughter."

"Must you leave me so soon? Oh, Rupert, I am afraid! But dear—never so dear as now, when this strange fear is upon me—should be angry you must submit to his will. You must try to forget me, who can never be worthy you. Loving you as I do with all my heart, with all my strength, I yet could better bear to live all my life without you than to know I had brought want and grief upon you."

"You shall not look on the dark side. My father has never yet denied me anything; it would be curious if he did so now. And Kitty, even should he be very angry I cannot do as you advise. I will never give you up. For me 'There shines one woman and none but she,' and you are that woman. Kitty darling, should the worst come, I will find some way in which to earn bread for you and myself. You have no extravagant tastes, and I should be content so long as I had but you."

"Oh," she said, with a burst of grateful tears, "you give up all for me; and if I served you all the days of a long life I never could repay your love and goodness. I am not fit to be your wife; and yet—and yet, no other woman could love you as I do. Rupert! Heaven grant me grace to make you happy."

"I know you will do that, little woman. There, dry your tears, and let us spend one happy half-hour together. I suppose I must say to see my uncle."

"I think you had best do so, or he might be angry when he found you had been here. He does not get more amiable with passing time, although perhaps I should not say so."

He laughed as he drew her close.

"He is a cantankerous old curmudgeon; but I shall always owe him a heavy debt of gratitude because he discovered my wife for

me. I wonder how he will receive the news of our engagement?"

"Not very graciously. He does not regard me very kindly, but Mrs. Kennedy is an angel. My own mother could not be gentler to me than she is."

Then they sat talking, as lovers have talked through all ages, and took very little notice of the passing time until a sonorous school-bell near chimed four, and Rupert sprang up in amazement.

"I must go Kitty, or I shall miss my train; but I shall be back again in two days with my good news. And then—then, sweetheart what happy years will lie spread before us! Kiss me, sweet, and wish me good-bye! Make what excuse you can for me to my worthy uncle."

Lip to lip, heart to heart, they stood, giving vow for vow, all unconscious of the dark face frowning upon them through the aperture. Slowly and noiselessly Danstan Kennedy turned away, and meeting a servant said,—

"Do not tell Mr. Rupert I have been in," and so left the house again.

CHAPTER IV.

RUPERT went down to Peckerton where he was received with effusion. Everybody was ready to make much of the successful young student; and people were not likely to forget either that he was Admiral Kennedy's only son, and heir to a very fine unencumbered property. The Admiral himself looked almost absurdly proud of Rupert as he entered Mrs. Maston's drawing-room with him. Was there another young fellow present who could compare with him in physique or comeliness? Then, too, what a charm there was in his bright, frank ways and speech!

"The woman he marries will be the luckiest woman on earth!" was his unspoken thought.

As for Rupert he was a little graver than usual, knowing that on the morrow he would deal his father's pride a bitter blow; and the love between them was so deep and real that he hated the mere idea of paining him. But he had had enough of secrecy, and he owed it to Kitty to acknowledge her before all his small world.

In the meantime the girl was full of anxiety concerning the way in which the Admiral would receive Rupert's confession, and too much absorbed in her own thoughts to notice the stern and condemning look in Mr. Kennedy's eyes. He said nothing to his wife of his discovery that night, but brooded over it, trying to see the best course of action; and in the morning he had made his decision.

"Eunice," he said, "Kitty Romaine must leave here."

"Leave here!" the lady exclaimed, surprisedly. "Why, Danstan?"

Then he told his story, stigmatising Kitty as artful and designing, and Rupert not one bit better than the general run of young men. But for once the meek wife dared to question his wisdom.

"Kitty is not the sort of girl to indulge in idle or foolish flirtations, and if Rupert has addressed her in the language of love I am quite sure his intentions are honourable. And Kitty is pretty and refined enough to be any man's wife."

"Class distinctions must be observed," Mr. Kennedy answered coldly. "I shall, however, say nothing to the girl until I have seen Arnold. If he chooses to approve such a *mésalliance*, of course I have nothing more to say on the subject. I am now going to telegraph him to come here at once; and you understand, Eunice, I will not permit you to hold any intercourse with Kitty Romaine until I have talked matters over with my brother."

She knew his iron will and inflexible determination too well to offer any further opposition; and afraid lest Kitty should guess, from a momentary glimpse of her face, how

much disturbed she was, spent the greater part of that day abroad.

The Admiral was talking gaily to a group of ladies when his brother's telegram was handed to him. It read;—

"Come at once; important business. Meet you at Baker-street. Say nothing to Rupert."

"What the deuce is up?" the Admiral said to himself. Then aloud, "My dear Mrs. Maston, I am afraid I must run away from you, important business calls me to town; but if possible I will get back to-morrow."

"I hope it is nothing unpleasant," his hostess said cordially. "And oh! how we shall miss you. You have been the life and soul of our little party, and I am quite afraid the ladies will not forgive your desertion."

"Not desertion, madam," gallantly. "I shall return with all possible speed, and mine will be the loss. If you will excuse me I will make my few preparations and be off. I find I have no time to spare."

As he went up to his room he met Rupert. "Oh, I'm glad to find you alone father. I have something I want to tell you."

"Sorry I can't stay to hear it now, my boy, but I am called away on business. Shall be back to-morrow; keep your news till then. I have not a moment to spare." And so Rupert's confession was not made.

The day was closing in when the old gentleman reached Baker-street, where his brother, grim and tall, was waiting him. In the wan light he looked very saturnine and forbidding.

"Well, Danstan," said the sailor, "what's the row? Why the deuce have you hurried me up to town in such a mysterious fashion? It's nothing pleasant, I'll be bound."

"You are right," grimly; "but get in. I'll tell you all as we drive home."

And he did, not sparing poor Kitty in the least. He laid bare all her little story to the Admiral, and quite unconsciously boasted of his own charity; lamented that Rupert had got into mischief whilst in his house, and under his care, as it were, and ended by saying,—

"Now, Arnold, I hardly think you would permit an alliance between these two; and you would not have your son play the villain!"

"By Heaven! I'd disown him if he did. But," with a fierce oath, "a Kennedy deserves something better than a nameless wench for his wife. Look here, Danstan, I'll see the girl, and if she's sensible I'll compromise the matter with her; but if Rupert has made her any promise, and she keeps him to it, I'll wash my hands of him. But I never will receive such a designing little hussy as my daughter."

"That is not to be thought of; but I am sorry to say Eunice is very much attached to this young person, and I am afraid we shall have some trouble with her. But I am master in my own house, and so I have resolved to send Kitty Romaine packing to-morrow. I think I know of a suitable situation for her, where she can be carefully guarded. Greatly as she deserves punishment I cannot send her homeless into the world."

"Great Scott, no!" and the Admiral made use of an expression more forcible than polite. His brother shuddered.

"You have not overcome your unhappy habit, Arnold?" he said.

"No, nor never shall; but we need not quarrel about that. You use your own set of phrases, and leave me free to use mine. Here we are! Woe! what a gloomy old place it is! It would kill me if I attempted to live in it."

Without a word of reply Mr. Kennedy led the way into the hall and from thence into his study, where the light was already falling fast.

"Will you see Kitty Romaine now, Arnold, or after we have dined?"

"Now. If I have any unpleasant business on hand I never rest or eat until it is transacted; and warring with a woman makes me feel like a coward. Send for the girl at once! Oh! for Heaven's sake, don't light the gas. I have

to see a woman's confusion or distress; and there's quite light enough for us to talk by."

"Ah you please!" and, ringing a bell, he bade a servant send Kitty to them.

The Admiral, tall and broad-shouldered, stood before one of the windows gazing with a crimson blind tassel, and wishing the affair well over.

Mr. Kennedy had dropped into his chair, and waited motionless and impassive for the girl's coming.

A light step in the hall, a hand upon the door; and then, as the sailor turned, he saw in the dim light a slender young figure, which paused timidly, and heard a sweet, low voice say,—

"You sent for me, Mr. Kennedy!" and through its sweetness there ran a tremor as of fear.

"Yes. Come in and shut the door!" And when she had obeyed, he turned to his brother with a wave of the hand. "This is Admiral Kennedy, Mr. Rupert's father; and he wishes to know what understanding exists between his son and you?"

She caught her breath sharply, and for a moment was silent. Then she asked, scarcely above a whisper,—

"Has not Mr. Rupert told him?"

"He has had no chance," the sailor answered, bluffly. "It was my brother who sent for me, and told me a most astounding piece of news. Look here, young woman; I don't mean to be hard upon you; but if you think for a moment I shall admit you into my family you are mistaken. No, if there is any foolish flirtation between you and my boy it must end at once and for ever. Be honest with me, and tell me what understanding there is between you?"

She tried to speak, but failed twice; and the Admiral, whose heart was soft enough however rough his manner, said, in an almost kindly tone,—

"Now, my girl, don't be afraid to speak the truth. You have only been a little foolish, and Ru is a handsome young scamp; but you'll be wise to confess all now, and to save further trouble."

She spoke then, with a sweet, unconscious dignity,—

"Five months ago Mr. Kennedy asked me to be his wife, and I promised—conditionally."

"What! And you have been deceiving my brother and myself so long?"

"Sir, Rupert feared your opposition, and wished to wait until he had taken his degree before broaching the subject. He did not intend deceit."

"Probably not," savagely. "And may I ask what were your conditions?"

"That he would not hold me to my promise if in any way it endangered his future welfare."

"You are an astute young lady, and it seems have no intention of sharing poverty with my son. I am afraid your love is of a very material type."

The hot blood flooded the poor girl's face. She was glad the gathering darkness hid her emotion from her persecutors. Her voice was steadier than before, when she answered his taunt,—

"I did not suppose, sir, you would judge me kindly or correctly. I could not hope for that. But, much as you wrong me, at least believe me when I say that I esteem my lover's happiness before my own; and rather than injure him I will submit to any conditions you may exact or impose."

"Are you willing to relinquish all claim to him?"

"Not willing, sir, but ready if the need arises," she answered, bravely.

"It has already arisen. I admit my son has not behaved well to you, but you must have felt from the beginning that such an alliance as he proposed would be most distasteful to his family. I blame him greatly, but—"

"But the greater blame rests on this young person," broke in Mr. Kennedy. "She has

willfully and persistently deceived those who rescued her from want or shame; she has added ingratitude to her other sins."

"Softly, softly brother! It isn't fair to lay so much upon the woman's shoulders. That's just what Adam did, and men have done over and over again since his day; and it's a cowardly trick. Miss Romayne, I blame you less than I do my son. You had everything to gain by a marriage with him; but he has no excuse for forgetting what is due to his family and his position. I don't want to be hard with you; but it is wiser that I should place matters before you very plainly, to prevent all future misunderstandings. If Rupert persists in this folly, from the day he marries you he is no longer my son. I wash my hands of him. You know what that means for him—poverty in lieu of riches, for I swear not a penny of mine shall ever come to him. You cannot love him if you are willing to pull him down to your own level, to see him drag out his life in poverty and despair. Girl, in a little while he would curse the day he met you."

She clasped her hands over her tortured heart, and said under her breath,—

"You need say no more. I am a poor girl, all alone and friendless, and perhaps I am rightly punished for my presumption; but I—even I—am not without my pride. You need have no further fear of me. I will not force myself upon one who so misjudges me as you have done; and, sir, although you mock at my love, and choose to think me mercenary, I can afford to smile, knowing my own integrity."

"If you loved your son as I have done, as I always shall, you would understand me better. You would place his happiness first. I promise here and now, solemnly as though I were dying, that without your consent I will neither see nor communicate with him any more, unless it is to write him a line of farewell. I will not spoil his life or embitter his days. He is quite, quite free, and may Heaven make him as happy as you have made me wretched."

Her face shone ghastly white through the gathering dusk; her great dark eyes glowed like stars; and the admiral's honest heart was smitten with admiration and pity for her. Let her be what she might—adventuress, intrigante, she had great courage, and he admired nothing so much.

"I believe you will keep your promise," he said, almost gently, "and I am much obliged to you for giving me so little trouble. If you will allow me, I shall be happy to recompense you in a measure for your disappointment," and he took out his pocket-book.

But he was hardly prepared for the indignation with which she realised his intention.

"How dare you so insult me?" she cried. "Oh! this is worse than all! Poor and obscure as my father was, he would have scorned to have offered money as an equivalent for blighted hopes and a broken heart. I am glad your son will never know what should be your shame!"

"I—I—upon my soul, Danaian, speak for me."

"There is no need. This young person is bent on making a scene. You do not understand her class as I do. To-morrow she will doubtless be quite ready to accept your generous gift."

"Oh, cruel! cruel! Mr. Kennedy, is this the charity you preach?"

"That will do, Romayne; there is no need for further speech. I have done my best for you, and you have rewarded me with basest ingratitude and deceit. I can no longer allow my wife to associate with you. But I will not cast you utterly adrift. To-morrow I will take you to a new home, where you will be carefully guarded."

"No, sir. To-morrow I shall know how to help myself. I am not ungrateful, but I am human, and I have already borne too much," and with that she went from the room, leaving

the Admiral in a most uncomfortable state of mind.

CHAPTER V.

SHE went slowly up to her own room, her heart like lead within her bosom; but she could not cry. She was full of passionate indignation against Mr. Kennedy and the Admiral.

How dare he, Rupert's father, offer her a bribe to forego her love? What manner of woman did he believe her to be?

"Oh, father! oh, my father!" she moaned, "come back to me! The world is so hard, and I—I—my courage fails me. What shall I do? Oh! my heart, what shall I do?"

But she was not given to much weeping, this little wail, who was so sorely tossed and buffeted about on the cruel ocean of life; and when she had won back her self-control she began to pack her few belongings into her modest trunk.

She hardly remembered her patron's promise to find her another home; and she was fully resolved to free herself from his control.

His mere presence in the house oppressed her with a sense of sickness and fear. She must get away. She had promised to leave her lover free; but should he come to her pleading with her to forego her hard decision, she was horribly afraid lest she should yield, and so spoil all his life, mar all his prospects.

Night had come, and she sat before her open window, trying to think calmly, to map out the future that lay stretched before her in such awful desolation.

What should she do with all the years of her life! She was so young, and sorrow had come so early to her. At her age most girls were glad; but she—oh! it was too hard, too hard.

She was scarcely eighteen, and she might live to be eighty. Was every year of her life to be so heavy with grief as this? Then words she had read but the day before came to her memory to torture her afresh.

"So short is our life, but with space for all things to forsake us,

A bitter delusion, from which nought can awake us,

Till Death's dogging footsteps at morn or eve shall o'ertake us."

With a pitiful gesture she spread out her arms before her, and laying her face upon them, whispered,—

"Dear Heaven, let me die here, and now. Surely, death is mild compared with this agony of pain."

"Kitty! are you there?" whispered a voice from the doorway. "May I come in? Oh Kitty, how my heart aches for you."

She lifted her head.

"Mrs. Kennedy, do you know everything?" "Yes," closing the door cautiously, and advancing towards. "Mr. Kennedy has told me. Oh, you poor child, what good did you think could come of your love? But, Kitty dear, there is no girl I would like so well for Rupert's wife as you. It is cruel, most cruel, that class prejudice should come between you and Ru. I wish you were my own child!"

"Oh thank you, thank you for these words; they do me good. And you are not very angry with me that I begged my secret so close?"

"Angry! No, child! I have only room in my heart for pity, you poor, helpless, friendless little soul. But take courage, Kitty, Rupert will never give you up. He is as true as steel."

"I know, I know. But oh! dear friend, do you for a moment believe that I could endanger all his future happiness, make his love for me a curse to him? No, no, not when I leave here I shall strive only to hide myself away from him—to be lost to him as utterly as though I were dead. If one must suffer, let it be me. But oh! dear Mrs. Kennedy, if you should see him, tell him that I loved and love him with all my soul and strength; that I pray

he may forget me and be happy; that I was never worthy to be his wife; and—and in time he will learn this, and thank me for acting as I did."

"Kitty, you are an angel!"

"Oh, no, not only a loving woman. I think that if by the sacrifice of my life I could serve him I should not hesitate to die. Now, dear Mrs. Kennedy, tell me what Mr. Kennedy proposes doing with me?"

The lady hesitated. Her heart was a little bitter against her husband and his brother.

"Kitty, it is a shame," she said at last, "but they are so angry with you; and Mr. Kennedy has determined to take you to a servants' home. The matron is a very severe disciplinarian—a hard woman, without any affection. She wants an assistant, and Mr. Kennedy thinks you might suit, but he intends telling her all your story, and you would be under constant surveillance."

The hot blood flooded the girl's pale face, and she reared her head high; but by a great effort she refrained from speech, and Mrs. Kennedy went on,—

"I will come and see you sometimes if I may, and I will do my best to interest my friends in you; and in the meantime, my poor child, let me prove my affection in a material way. Mr. Kennedy will give your share into the matron's hands, to be spent as she sees fit; but I cannot let you go from me penniless and helpless. Kitty dear, it is not much I can give you, only three pounds, but it will help you a little. Take it, and let me go before my absence is discovered."

Just a moment the girl hesitated; and the lady pressed it the more upon her.

"If not as a gift, accept it as a loan," she said, and Kitty answered with a sob,—

"As a loan then, and Heaven bless you for all your goodness; and blessed the kindly hand with passionate gratitude. 'I will repay you soon as I can; and, I would like to think you will plead with Rupert for his father—after all it is natural he should be angry. And tell him not to try to find me, or he will drive me on to some desperate step.'"

"I will tell him all you say. And now, Kitty dear, I must go or my absence will be noticed. Perhaps I shall not see you any more, before you leave us; so kiss me now, child, and let us say good-bye."

Their lips met, and the elder woman's hands clasped lovingly over the other's dark, soft tresses. Then she gently set her aside, turned slowly and sorrowfully away, and went out, closing the door noiselessly behind her.

Kitty went back to her seat by the window. "Thank Heaven!" she whispered, "I have help now; and I will no longer be the puppet of his will. If I cannot get work I can die. But I will do my best, for her sake, who has been as a mother to me."

Without disrobing she lay down upon her bed, and, despite her sorrow, soon fell fast asleep, and did not wake until the breakfast bell was ringing. Then, starting up hurriedly, she smoothed her hair, washed her face and hands, and, straightening the crumpled folds of her dress, waited for the next act of the drama.

Martha brought up her breakfast of weak tea and thick bread and butter; and as she set it down with a clatter remarked,—

"Master says you're to have your things packed by twelve. He and the missus are going to a Temperance Lecture; and won't be back till noon; so you've got plenty of time, Miss Kitty."

"Very well, Martha; I shall be ready. You can go."

She tried to eat, but could not; her brain was in a whirl, and she was sick with excitement. Her one thought was to get away, to be free of Dunstan Kennedy's harsh supervision; and as the morning wore by she began to pack a few necessary articles in a small Gladstone. Then she wrote a short letter to Mrs. Kennedy, and having sealed and directed it, she watched her opportunity to escape. Stealing out of her room to reconnoitre she saw the hall was empty, and the door slightly ajar. In an

instant she ran downstairs, and in less time than it takes to tell found herself standing in the sunny street.

There was no time to lose!

At any moment the clergyman might return, and she was woefully afraid of his influence over her. What should she do? Then, like an inspiration, came the thought of a woman she had known for many years; a decent body who had taken a small house at Shepherd's Bush, which she let out in apartments. She would go to her; and surely, before her small capital was exhausted, she would find something to do.

So to Shepherd's Bush she went; and there was great consternation at the Vicarage when her flight was discovered. The old sailor regretted his harshness, and was ready to offer an almost fabulous reward for any authentic information concerning the lost girl. After all, she was little more than a child, and her love for Rupert might have been genuine. Dunstan Kennedy smiled grimly,—

"Brother you don't know these people as I do. They are as full of wiles as a fox. In a short while Kitty Romayne will reappear with some plausible story, and soliciting further help."

"For shame, Dunstan!"

The voice was Mrs. Kennedy's, and she stood flushed and tearful in the open doorway.

"Is this the charity you preach, the charity which 'thinketh no evil?' Kitty Romayne is as good and modest a girl as any under the sun, and no man need be ashamed to make her his wife. I hope you are both satisfied with your work. It is manly to drive a poor orphan from her only shelter. Brother, have you thought what Rupert will say when he learns the truth?"

"Eunice!" her husband said, sternly, "be quiet!" but for once she was without fear. She had broken through the long habit of half servile submission, and her woman's heart had grown suddenly brave.

"I must speak; I have been a coward to keep silent so long. For aught we know to the contrary, that poor girl has found a rest where so many have found it before her; and, if so, how will you feel with the thought of her death always upon your conscience? See, here is her last message! Take it and read it, 'Arnold. I—I cannot.'"

With his ruddy face grown pale, the Admiral took the short note Kitty had left for Mrs. Kennedy, and read it through in utter silence; but Eunice knew what he suffered by his expression.

"MY DEAR AND HONOURED FRIEND,—

"In going away from you thus I feel I am acting for the best. I see now I should never have listened to Mr. Rupert Kennedy, although, indeed, I fear were the temptation again to assail me I should again succumb to it. Do not seek to find me. I will not be found, and I pray you help him to forget one whose only claim upon him was her great love to him. I know my flight will prejudice some against me; but indeed—indeed I cannot live the life Mr. Kennedy has planned for me. It would madden me. And why should I, who am no criminal, be subjected to such degradation as Mr. Kennedy proposes for me? I will try to earn my own livelihood honestly, and if I fail—well, there is always the river. One thing more, dear friend: Do not let Rupert guess the share his father has had in this most unhappy business. I loved my own dear parent too well to wish any estrangement between them; and I am quite sure Admiral Kennedy acted as he believed for the best. Good-bye; love me and pray for me still!"

The sailor cleared his throat before he ventured to speak; then he said somewhat unsteadily,—

"I wish I had not been quite so harsh. After all, the girl seems to have some right feeling about her."

"You are easily deceived, Arnold. This was written with a view to effect," said the clergyman. "Well, I wash my hands of her

entirely. But what explanation shall you give, Rupert?"

"If he comes to me I shall tell him the truth," Mrs. Kennedy broke in. "He ought to know it. Poor Kitty! poor child! If ever you pray, Arnold, don't forget to entreat Heaven her death may not lie at your door," and with that Eunice Kennedy swept from the room.

"I wish," said her brother-in-law, as he wiped his heated face; "yes, upon my soul, I wish I had not meddled in this matter. Things would have righted themselves without my interference. In time the young people would have grown tired of each other."

"Kitty Romayne had every inducement to tire of Rupert," sneered the other.

"Oh, hang it, Dunstan, give the girl credit for some real feeling; and my boy is handsome and good enough to win any girl's heart. What the plague shall I say to him tomorrow, for of course he must be told? And upon my honour I'd rather face a crocodile than Rupert under such circumstances."

"You reverse the order of things and stand in awe of your son. Why, in a year or two he will thank you for your present action."

"I hope so, I'm sure; but I very much doubt it. He's not fickle."

Here the luncheon bell rang, and Mr. Kennedy led the way to the room where it was served. To his surprise Eunice was not there.

"Where is your mistress?" he asked of the servant in waiting.

"In her own room, sir. She said she was not well enough to come down, and hoped you would excuse her."

The meal passed in a most uncomfortable silence. Admiral Kennedy's conscience was not easy with regard to Kitty, and every time he thought of the bribe he had offered, his face grew hot with shame and self scorn.

"I behaved like a brute," he thought. "What would the boy say if he knew all?"

That night he left for Peckerton without seeing Eunice again, and Dunstan Kennedy felt relieved by his departure.

CHAPTER VI.

"AUNT, where is Kitty?"

The lady dropped her work with a little cry.

"Rupert! Oh, my poor boy!" and both hands went out to meet his. "You know all?"

"Yes, all the shameful, scandalous story, and I left Peckerton at once. Can't you tell me anything of my poor girl?"

Her eyes filled with tears as she looked into the handsome, haggard young face, which had been so bonny so short a while ago, and her voice was broken as she said,—

"I know no more than you have heard. Since she left us not a line or a message has reached me from her, and sometimes, Heaven help me! I think she is dead."

"No, no!" he cried, vehemently, "not that, aunt, I dare not face such a thought! I should go mad if I believed it! Tell me all you can about her flight; perhaps we may yet be able to trace her."

"I can tell you nothing you do not already know. Rupert; on what terms are you with your father?"

"The very worst," moodily. He threatened if ever marry Kitty to disinherit me, and I have sworn to marry no one else. I am not going back to Peckerton; I mean to spend all my energies in finding her, and in October I begin to walk St. George's. I wish with all my heart I had chosen some less expensive profession, so that I might the sooner have a home to offer Kitty, if I find her. Had she any friends with whom she could take refuge for a time?"

"None so far as I am aware. Oh, Ru, you poor boy, how sorry I am for you; and indeed I am grieved too, for your father. It is hard

there should be any cloud between you; he loves you so."

"A man shall leave father and mother and cleave to his wife," the young man said, sternly, "and I am bound to Kitty by every tie of honour and of love. Until my father recognises this we are best apart."

Eunice was half afraid of the tempest she had helped to raise.

"Rupert, he has only you; and he is getting old. Don't be hard."

The young stern face never softened, the deep blue eyes never lost their resentful look.

"If I find Kitty safe and well, I will think then of reconciliation—not before."

"Think what you owe your father, how all his hopes are centred in you?" she pleaded, laying her hand on his.

"I am not likely to forget; but he has gone too far. Now tell me, have you any idea where she has gone—what she intends doing?"

"I have none; but perhaps later I shall have some happy inspiration. In the meanwhile, Rupert, you must have some refreshment; and, of course, you will occupy your old room."

"No, thank you. I have taken apartments close by, and shall endeavour to see you daily. But under the circumstances I cannot remain here," and from that he would not go.

It was with wet eyes Eunice Kennedy saw him go.

"If I had such a gallant son," she said, "I could not so wound him. It breaks my heart to see his haggard young face and sunken eyes. Heaven send a happy ending to his love."

Even whilst she watched him go, Kitty sat poring over the long list of advertisements contained in the *Daily Telegraph*; but at present she had found nothing to suit her, and her courage was beginning to fail her. Day by day her small store of money was wasting, and when it was gone what should she do? Suddenly the light flashed into her eyes, and a faint flush rose to her cheeks.

"Surely I am competent to fill this situation?" she said, under her breath, and then read aloud,—

"Wanted.—For a superior lodging house, a young lady to help in management and keep accounts; must be active, and an early riser. Salary £15, and home comforts.—Apply to Mrs. Shippey, 5, Albuda-terrace, Corney-stone."

She wasted very little time in replying, giving as her referee the good woman with whom she lodged, and then she waited anxiously for Mrs. Shippey's reply.

"I should be glad to go," she thought as she tossed restlessly to and fro that night. "Corneystone is such a long way from London, and such an isolated place, that no one will ever think to look for me there."

The next two days she was in a fever of anxiety, and at night a letter came for her addressed in a very uneducated hand. It ran thus:

"DEAR MRS.—

"In reply to yours, I would like to say that I want a young lady who can do up accounts, and see after the comfort of the lodgers. You seem as if you might suit, and if you can give me a good character I shall be glad to see you here next Monday. I can promise you a good home, and a mother's care.—Yours faithful,

"RENECCA SHIPPEY."

Poor Kitty's heart sank a little as she read this unique letter, but she was not in a position to be particular, so she went to her landlady,—

"Mrs. Todd, will you give me a character for respectability?" she asked, with a faint smile.

"To be sure, miss! Have you got something to do at last? Dear, dear, I am glad. There, pass me my writing case, and let me say all I can for you. Let me see, 'Young, lady-

like, pretty and well-educated; of most respectable parentage.' Will that do?"

"I am afraid you have praised me too highly," said Kitty, with a little weary smile; "but, oh! I hope I shall be the successful candidate, for my money is wasting so fast. Mrs. Todd, I am rather doubtful about a lady who mispells so dreadfully. I picture her as a typical boarding-house keeper, and fancy life will not be too pleasant with her."

"Oh, nonsense!" said the other. "My own mother could neither read nor write, and yet she was a lady! I never knew her say an unkind word or do a mean trick, and that's more than I could say for a good many real born ladies I've met. And Miss Kitty, if you aren't comfortable, remember you can always come back here."

The days slipped by, and on Saturday a note from Mrs. Shippey reached the young orphan. It was short, and to the point.

"Miss Romayne may come on Monday, and Mrs. Shippey will be glad if she will take the first train from Uxbridge Station; it gets to Corneystone at eleven forty five."

So on Monday Kitty bade Mrs. Todd goodbye, and started on her long journey. It was through a picturesque country, and she found many objects of interest to occupy her attention. But for the thought of Rupert she would have been almost happy.

Corneystone was a small watering-place on the south coast, and a favourite town with invalids in the winter months, on account of its mildness. The scenery was good, the beach pleasant, and it boasted a grand stretch of sea. As Kitty was whirled up to the little platform her eyes brightened, and a faint flush rose to her cheeks.

"If only Mrs. Shippey is a decent body I may rest here. The place is very lovely!" and as she thought thus the train drew up.

On the platform stood a comely woman of forty or more, carefully and even elegantly dressed, and her dark eyes wandered restlessly from window to window until they rested on Kitty's dainty face. Then she went forward, and as the girl alighted said,—

"Ain't you Miss Romayne?"

Kitty answered in the affirmative, and the other offered her hand cordially.

"I knew I couldn't be mistaken; I never am, my dear. I'd a sort of notion what you'd be like, and I ain't disappointed. Here's the cab; jump in. It ain't far to Albuda-terrace, but I'm no great shakes at walking."

Her manner was totally devoid of refinement, but very kind; and when once they were seated in the cab she turned and gave her pale companion a hearty kiss.

"That's your welcome, my dear, and I hope you'll be happy here. I like your face, and I think we'll get on fine together. I always have plenty of lodgers, and so I'd need; for I ain't got a penny beyond what I earn. You see, my dear, I married above me; and when my husband died his folks didn't take any more notice of me. Then, I'm that ignorant I can't talk to the ladies as I should, and I make awful mistakes in their bills which is bad for both parties. So at last I thought I'd advertise for a young lady to help me. I don't want you to do menial work, my dear. I've got two good servants as ever was. Well, here we are; and I say I'm glad, for there's no place like home."

Kitty gave one quick, half-scared look at the house; then her tired face brightened. It was a handsome, red-brick building, picked out with white stone, and before the drawing-room windows rose a substantial balcony, rich with blossoms and evergreens. The curtains were spotlessly white, and every pane of glass winked and blinked in the broad, noon-day glare.

"It ain't a bad place is it?" said Mrs. Shippey complacently, "and what's more it's my own. Now come in do. You must be dying for a bite and a sup," and unheeding any remonstrance she drew Kitty into a small, nicely-furnished room, where a very substantial meal was spread.

"You only want a bit more colour in your face to make you perfect," she said, as they discussed the dainties before them, "and this is just the sort of place to get it. I am sure I hope you'll be happy. I know I'll do my best to make you so."

And she was as good as her word. Thoroughly illiterate, she was yet thoroughly kind, and had a certain innate delicacy many a lady might have envied. Kitty found plenty to do; but her work was so sweetened by kindness, her comfort so much considered, that but for the thought of Rupert she would have been quite happy.

Every day Mrs. Shippey sent her to walk on the beach, or would persuade her to row over to a small island lying at a short distance from them, and soon the girl grew quite expert with the oar. This island, called St. Olaf, was a favourite place for picnics, but it was quite uninhabitable, because at high tide it was totally submerged, and consequently dangerous to any passing vessel.

The months wore by, and Kitty daily gathered fresh strength and beauty; but it hurt Mrs. Shippey often to see the sorrowful shadows in her eyes, the downward droop of the sweet mouth. Touched by her goodness Kitty had confided her little story to her, suppressing nothing but names, and it was the landlady's desire that she should forget her gentleman lover. She noticed that one or two young tradesmen were particularly attentive to her protégée, and for her own sake as well as Kitty's she wished the girl to settle down at Corneystone.

"You'd be happier, my dear," she said, "than if you married into a family as wouldn't acknowledge you. But Kitty shook her head.

"I shall never marry unless I marry Rupert, and that will never be, unless his father relents. I will not hurt him."

"But don't you think you're hurting him in keeping yourself hid up from him? And if he's a man he'll laugh at his friends, and learn to get a living for you and him."

"You forget. He has never known anything but luxury. Poverty would be doubly hard for him to bear," and there the subject ended. But Kitty thought to herself, "Forget you, my darling! Ah, no, no, no! You stooped from your high estate to love me; you honoured me above all women; and so long as I live I will be faithful and true, even though we never meet again, and you (forgetting me) take another love to yourself."

So November came, unusually mild and bright, and one morning, when Kitty returned from a shopping expedition, Mrs. Shippey met her in the hall, with every appearance of excitement.

"What has happened?" said Kitty, tossing aside hat and muff.

"Oh! my dear, I feel quite important. The drawing-room floor is taken by such a nice old gentleman—and big swell too, Admiral Kennedy. We must try to make him comfortable!"

Kitty stared at her with wide eyes, and her face grew so suddenly white that Mrs. Shippey said,—

"Ain't you well, dear? What is it? Lor! you look like a ghost!"

"It is nothing; I was only a little startled. Dear Mrs. Shippey, do not let me see the new lodger. He—he is Rupert's father."

"You don't say so! Well, I'm sorry I let him the rooms, the old wretch; but I don't see very well how I can afford to send him packing."

"Do nothing of the sort. Why should you? I question if he would know me again, and after all I need not see him. If you let Jane wait upon him I will undertake to do her work."

"Indeed, you won't," blantly. "I'll see to the old tartar myself; so don't worry or fash yourself about it. But all the same I wish he hadn't come to Albuda-terrace."

CHAPTER VII.

A WEEK passed slowly by, and, fearful of recognition, Kitty kept herself well hidden. She refused to take her daily walk, or the almost daily row to St. Olaf's, and Mrs. Shippey grumbled that she was growing pale and "peaky."

Once she caught a glimpse of Admiral Kennedy, and her tender heart ached at the change she saw in him. Her eyes (keener than his) had pierced through the gloom on that June night, and seen a bronzed, healthy face; now the cheeks had fallen in, and the eyes were very sombre.

She guessed then that Rupert and he had quarrelled terribly, and that no reconciliation had taken place since.

Nothing was harder to bear than that knowledge. Rupert disgraced, perhaps disowned for her sake! Oh, she was not worthy such love and such sacrifice.

She had been tossed hither and thither on the ocean of life; she had weathered many a storm, suffered many a hardship, but nothing seemed so hard to her as this.

"I wish he had never seen me," she said again and again. "He was happy and contented until then. Oh, love! my love! I who would die to ensure your welfare have brought you nothing but trouble."

Brooding much over Rupert's troubles stole all her brightness from her, and Mrs. Shippey grew anxious.

"Now," she said, in an authoritative tone, "I ain't going to stand this nonsense any longer. Who is the Admiral that you need fear him? And ten chances to one he wouldn't know you if he met you; so just put on your hat and cloak, and go for a good walk along the beach. There, I won't take any refusal; you're looking as pale as a Christmas rose. Pake 'll be saying I starve you."

Laughing a little Kitty dressed and went out. It was a fine, clear day, with the slightest suspicion of frost, and before her the sea lay spread like a sheet of silver, for the sun shone full upon it.

Kitty drew a deep breath of delight. After all life was worth living when the world was so fair.

"If only we were together," she whispered to herself, "how happy we could be here!"

She went along the narrow path by the cliffs, and the rapid walking brought a slight flush to the dainty face, a light to the usually sad eyes.

On and on she went, until the fading light warned her it was time to return. With a half sigh she set her face towards home, and was within sight of Albada-terrace when she was accosted by "Darkey Jim," an old boatman who was a great favourite with Mrs. Shippey's lodgers.

"If you please, miss," he said, touching his cap, "would you be kind enough to tell me what that dark thing over at St. Olaf's is? Fears to me it's a man; and if 'tis there ain't no time to lose in getting him off. The tide's comin' up fast now."

Kitty stood with her hand shading her eyes a moment; then she said,—

"Yes, Jim, it is a man, and there is no time to lose. We must get him off the island with all possible speed."

"The sea is rollickin', miss; and I don't know as how I could manage the boat alone," Jim said, dubiously.

"I'll go with you. I am not afraid," and without farther parley she got into the boat. "Give me the sculls, Jim. When I am tired you can take them," and suiting the action to the word she made for the island.

The wind had changed now, and the sea was running high; but Kitty's heart did not fail her, and Darkey Jim did not know what fear meant. He rowed in silence for some time, then he said,—

"I guessed something was amiss more than a hour ago, for I saw a 'hempty' boat go sailin' off towards Rockyville, and I said, 'There's been a haccident.' Only you see,

miss, my eyes ain't what they was, and though I thought I heard shouts I couldn't see nothin' nohow."

Kitty made no reply. She was horribly alive to the rising of the tide; there was such a little strip of land left now for the unfortunate man to stand firm upon. She lifted her voice, and cried to him to be of good cheer. It was a very faint shout that answered her. But in less time than she had thought possible they reached the island; and heedless of the rushing water, of all save the peril in which one man stood, Kitty sprang out, and gathering her skirts about her, waded through the waves and came at last to—Admiral Kennedy!

For a moment she was staggered, but quickly recovering herself, she said,—

"Come at once! We have no time to lose! How ill you look? Lean on me, and you can tell us how your accident happened as we go homewards."

"I am faint," the Admiral answered, in a weak voice. "I've been here nearly three hours, and my arm is anything but easy. I can't tell you how it happened, but as I was stepping from my boat it shot from under me and landed me on the shingle with my arm doubled under me, and I reckon it's broken. I think I fainted. Anyhow, when I realised what had happened my boat was far enough out at sea."

"Come," said Kitty, offering her hand, "we must be going. Delay is dangerous. Where shall we take you?"

"To Albada-terrace, please" (quite meekly).

"My landlady is Mrs. Shippey."

"Then you are Admiral Kennedy. Mrs. Shippey has told me about you. I am her clerk, assistant and friend. Steady, please. The sea is rougher than I could wish," and gently as she could she drew him to the little boat, where Darkey Jim sat the picture of impatience.

"Hurry up, miss," he said. "It ain't too pleasant along this 'ere coast at dark, and it's hardly light now."

Once at Albada-terrace the Admiral turned gratefully to Kitty.

"You are a good and brave girl, and as pretty as you are brave. You have saved my life to-day, and there is nothing you can ask that I will refuse you. Tell me your name, my dear."

"They call me Kitty," she answered, quietly, and turned away.

The Admiral had been very ill. He had broken his right arm very badly, and the wetting he had got whilst stranded on St. Olaf's had brought on a low fever, which prostrated him terribly. And in all, through all, he insisted on Kitty's attendance.

"You have a sweet voice, my dear!" he said, "and it matches your face. If Heaven had seen fit to give me a daughter I would have had her fashioned after your style. What are your people about to let you go out into the world like this, for I reckon Mrs. Shippey is not related to you?"

"Oh, no! but she is so kind to me, and I love her dearly. I have neither father nor mother, not a relative in all the wide world."

"Poor little girl! But one day you will marry, and then all things will be changed and brightened for you!"

She made no answer, but he thought he saw the sheen of tears in her lovely eyes, and wondered a little over her emotion. He would have wondered still more could he have heard her cry a little later.

"Rupert! Rupert! my love, my love! Life is so hard to bear—so hard, and I am so weak!"

Daily she reads to the Admiral, and wrote the few letters he desired, but never a message was sent to the offending son; and often she wondered at this, often fretted in secret that Rupert should be cast out of his father's love. But there came a morning when the Admiral seemed unusually facetious, and nothing would please him save Kitty's journeying to

Wheatfield, the neighbouring town, in search of "Macaulay's Essays," and no sooner had she gone than he rang for Mrs. Shippey. She came quickly, and asked, half defiantly,—

"What is it, sir? I think you rang?"

"I want you to write a letter to my son; and I do not wish Miss—Miss—"

"Miss Kitty," said the landlady, as he paused.

"I don't wish Miss Kitty to know anything of it. By the way, what is her surname?"

"Well, really, sir, I can't see how that concerns you. She's never been called anything else but Miss Kitty since she came here. But I'm ready enough to write your letter, if you ain't too particular about spelling and writing."

"Sit down then," said the sailor. "I've been thinking, Mrs. Shippey, that my nurse and my son are well-suited to each other."

"Lor! sir, Miss Kitty's got a bean, and your son must be smart to cut him out," said Mrs. Shippey, with a mischievous gleam in her still handsome eyes. "But her sweetheart's father is a bit of a fool, and don't know when his son's well off, and won't hear of a wedding." Here the Admiral groaned, but Mrs. Shippey paid no heed to him, only went on coolly, "I'm ready now, sir, if you'll please to say what I'm to write."

So the Admiral dictated, and Mrs. Shippey wrote:—

"DEAR RUPERT,—

"Don't you think we have been strangers long enough? If you are willing to be friends I am. Don't trouble to answer this. If you are as sick as I am of this estrangement you will be with me to-morrow. I expect you."

A. KENNEDY."

"You are very restless to-day, said Kitty, as the Admiral went to the window for the fiftieth time. "Is not your arm so easy?"

"Yes, Miss Kitty, but I have a troublesome conscience, I'm afraid. Anyhow, I can't keep quiet. But you, child, sit down and talk to me. I like to hear your pleasant voice. I often wish you were my daughter; and I am not likely to forget you saved my life."

Her eyes shone through a mist of tears, as she answered, "I did very little for you, sir. I would do far more than that."

The door was opened with a flourish, and Mrs. Shippey said demurely—

"Your son, sir!"

The old man started up.

"Welcome, Rupert! welcome a thousand times!" but the son's eyes had gone beyond him to that quiet figure, that sweet, startled face, and he gave a great cry "Kitty! Kitty!" and went towards her with outstretched arms.

She forgot everything then—all her pain, all her sick longing and fears; even the Admiral's presence, as she ran into his embrace, sobbing out,—

"At last! at last! Oh! Rupert, I am content now to die!"

"Eh! what?" cried the Admiral, "what the deuce does this mean?"

"This, father; that unless I marry Kitty I will never call any woman wife. Can't you see for yourself, father, she is just the one girl in the world for me?"

"Well, I'm blest," said the Admiral, "I have been regularly sold. Kitty, you small witch, come here. Can you ever forgive me my folly and harshness? I was stupid enough to think a girl must needs be a lady born to be worthy my son. Will you kiss me and call me father?"

Her sweet eyes shone through her happy tears.

"I will love you for Rupert's sake," she said, and, bending, laid her fresh young lips to his.

"And I will be your dutiful and affectionate child—father!"

"And what to me, Kitty?" asked Rupert in a whisper.

She hid her face on his breast, whilst under her breath she said,—

"Your loyal, loving wife; dearly devoted to you through all my days."

All her trials now were ended, all the rough voyaging on the "ocean of life," and she was safe in the harbour now—the happiest wife and daughter, soon the happiest mother in all the land.

Dunstan Kennedy died suddenly, and his widow went to live with Rupert and his pretty wife; and his opposition to the marriage is a standing joke between her and the Admiral. Mrs. Shippey is not forgotten; and every summer she spends a whole blissful fortnight with "Miss Kitty and the babies," always declaring staunchly that, but for her, the union never would have taken place. And the Admiral—well, he simply worships Rupert's wife.

[THE END.]

FACETIE.

He: "I'll never marry a strong-minded woman." She: "No, I don't think you will."

A GENTLEMAN in homespun appears better than a snob in a dress suit.

A TRUE word is often spoken in jest, but we always like it to be about some other fellow.

"How curious Maude Madeup's hair looks? Sort of streaky in colour." "Yes, I think she's getting it on the instalment plan."

Mrs. GORDON says that if all fashionable people had to pay as they go, there would be fewer going.

A GIRL whose face in her fortune stands just as poor a chance as the rest of the world at a bank counter.

JESSIE: "What a pretty face! Who is it, dear?" Madge: "Why, that's my latest photograph."

A PRECAUTION.—He: "We are coming to a tunnel. Are you not scared?" She: "Not a bit, if you take the cigar out of your mouth."

MR. BOWBOW: "I wish you would help me out a little to day." Mr. BEE: "With pleasure. I'll hold open the door."

A WOMAN can conceal a headache that would make a man think that he was going to die right away.

JIMMY'S FIRST VIEW OF THE OCEAN.—"Oh, papa!" cried small Jimmy, as the wave receded from the shore, "somebody's taken the stopper out and the water is all running off."

WOULD BE BURTON: "Has your sister an eye for the beautiful?" Small Brother: "I guess so, for she told me it makes her eyes tired to look at you."

THE collar stud has done more to release man from the tyranny of a woman than all the philosophical works of humanity ever printed.

NO STUFFING THUMB.—"First Boarder: "Don't you always have a stuffy feeling in this house?" Second Boarder: "Not when we are in the dining-room."

He: "Why should you be so angry at me for stealing just one little kiss?" She: "Any self-respecting woman would be angry at a man who kissed her just once."

"Will you love me when I'm old?" sang a maiden of uncertain age. "Will I?" murmured a crusty old bachelor. "Do I? you mean?"

"There is only one cure for smoking," said the club man, "and that is death." "That isn't always sure," said the Presbyterian, significantly.

A WOMAN never hits anything with a stone or a hammer, but fate itself cannot exceed the certainty with which she can jab a man in the eye with an umbrella.

BANKER: "Are you not a burglar?" HANKER: "No; a friend." Banker: "What are you doing in my bedroom at midnight?" HANKER: "Keeping watch."

"Don't you know how to spell?" asked the exasperated teacher of the extremely phonetic boy. "Oh, yes," said the boy. "I know how to spell well enough, but the men who made the dictionaries don't seem to."

THE ARGUMENT FROM ANALOGY.—Polly (who has been raising her father's only dress-shirt before the fire) "Oh, mother, don't you think it is done enough now? It is quite brown."

MAUD: "How far do you live from here, Mr. Hangaround?" Mr. H.: "Oh, nearly two miles." Maud (innocently): "If you should start now, what time would you get home?"

MUST HAVE BEEN SMALL.—"Cholly had an idea yesterday." "What did he do with it?" "Lost it. He had his cane in his mouth at the time it occurred to him, and before he could get it out he had forgotten the idea."

He (class of '90): "Did you hear that astonishing discovery they've made, that hair grows after death?" She: "Oh, I'm so glad! Maybe you'll have a moustache in heaven."

MAGISTRATE (to old lady): "You have been convicted of drunkenness seven times at this court." "Yes, your honour." "Disgraceful—and you, an educated person, do not seem one bit ashamed." "No, your honour, I have got courage from my convictions."

MR. BLIMBURN (alarmed): "My dear, what is the matter?" Mrs. Blimburn (sobbing): "That insulting old photographer sent back word with my crayon: 'The original of this portrait is carefully preserved.' The hateful thing."

DISTINGUISHED GUEST (at the seaside hotel): "Garçon, you may hand me the menu. By the way, your face is strangely familiar." Garçon: "Possibly, sir, (grudgingly): I was a guest of this hotel last year." Distinguished Guest: "Indeed. (To himself): I was a waiter."

JESSIE: "If that bull should attack us, what could you do?" Tom: "I could reach that fence in less than two seconds." Jessie: "Yes, but what could I do?" Tom: "You? Why, your parasol would keep his attention until I was safely over."

"This isn't a menagerie," sharply observed an irascible woman to a man who was trying to force his way through the crowd at the door of the concert room. "No, I suppose not," returned the man, "or they wouldn't leave any of the animals to block up the entrance."

TRAMP (with tears in his eyes): "I do not ask you for money, sir, but what would you think if I should tell you I have had nothing to eat for forty-eight hours, and my poor wife and children are now starving in the street?" Practical Citizen: "I'd think you were a liar. Good-morning!"

FASHIONABLE WIFE: "Did you notice, dear, at the party last evening, how grandly our daughter Clara swept into the room?" Husband (with a grunt): "Oh, yes; Clara can sweep into a room grandly enough, but when it comes to sweeping out a room she isn't there."

MISS BEAUTY: "Miss Plainface told me that you taught her to swim in two lessons, Mr. Dashing. I wish you would teach me!" Jack Dashing: "I'm sure I should be delighted, Miss Beauty." Miss Beauty: "And how many lessons do you think I should want?" Jack Dashing: "Oh, I think at least a dozen."

NOT WIDE ENOUGH FOR HIM.—The Rev. Mr. Hittetup (meeting Jobkins on his way home from the lodge): "Oh, my brother, I am pained to see you in this condition! Why have you erred so? Why do you not walk in the straight and narrow path?" Jobkins: "Why (hic) don't I stick to ze (hic) shtraight an' narrow path? If you (hic) was as full 'sh I am you'd want a heel shtraet ter walk in. No, (hic) narrow paths for me to (hic) night, shanks!"

COL. YERGER: "I hear your son is going to get married." Judge PETERBY: "Yes, he is about to become a Benedict." "Why don't you make him wait until he is older and has got more sense." "Humph! If he should get a sensible spell he would not marry at all."

THINGS often seem to be sadly uneven in this world, but sometimes justice is done. Friend of the Family: "I am afraid you little fellows don't always agree. You fight sometimes, don't you?" Twins: "Yeh, thir, thomfith." Friend of the Family: "Ah! I thought so! Well, who whips?" Twins: "Mamma wiph."

"I THINK photography is very interesting," she said to a young man who is in that line. "Yes; it is." "I should like to have you make a picture of me." "With pleasure." "How would you prefer to take me?" He looked at her with a face that showed deep thought, and then replied, slowly but in a firm voice, "For better or for worse, by all means."

REV. CHARLES POUNDTEXT (who has been writing his sermon, looking up suddenly): "Maria, will you take the children out of the room for a few minutes?" Mrs. Poundtext (in surprise): "Certainly, my dear. But—are they annoying you?" Rev. Poundtext: "Not at all; but I have just dipped the gun brush in the ink-pot, and I would like to be at liberty to make a few remarks."

DURING a matrimonial dispute the wife of an apothecary, as a last resort, tried to work on her husband's better feelings by bursting into tears. "What's the use of crying," said he, "there's nothing to be made out of tears. I have tested them chemically, and find they consist of an infinitesimal proportion of phosphate of lime and a little chloride of soda; the rest is insipid, worthless water."

A LEARNED clergyman was accosted in the following manner by an illiterate preacher who despised education. "Sir, you have been to college, I suppose?" "Yes, sir," was the reply. "I am thankful," rejoined the latter, "that the Lord has opened my mouth to preach without learning." "A similar event," replied the former, "occurred in Balaam's time, but such things are of rare occurrence at the present day."

"John," said an experienced member of the Society of Friends, "I hear that you are going to be married." "Yes," replied John. "I am." "Well, I have one little piece of advice to give thee, and that is, never marry a woman worth more than thou art. When I married my wife I was worth just fifty shillings, and she was worth sixty-two; and whenever differences have occurred between me she has always thrown up the odd shillings."

THAT eminent citizen, Bristol: "Now, Amy, did you tell that ass, who is going to saddle himself with you, that I won't have him continuously kissing you? Did you tell him he was just to kiss you once when he came and once when he went away, and have done with it?" "Yes, pa." "And I suppose the young puppy called me names?" "No, pa, he said all right." "H'm! pretty sort of lover!" "Well, pa, he has never kissed me before."

Not many Sundays ago a Buffalo Sunday-school was invited to participate in a union service with another school a few blocks away, and formed in line with the superintendent at the head, and marched out of doors singing the superintendent's favourite hymn, "Hail the Fort." Bystanders stopped, and every one looked on at the beautiful sight of the proud superintendent marshalling his handsome cohorts of carolling children up the street. Their singing charmed all hearts, too, but when they struck the second stanza:

"See the mighty host advancing,
Satan leading on"—
somebody snickered, and the superintendent dropped back to the rear to speak to the teacher of the infant class.

SOCIETY.

The Prince of Wales has a collection of over one hundred and seventy-two walking-sticks. The hair is worn as fluffy and dry as possible, so as to puff out and look thick.

The experiment of electing a woman president of a synagogue is being tried by a congregation near Paris.

One New York woman makes her living by writing obituary poetry, and perhaps that is the most unique line of verse-writing yet attempted.

FANCIES, either of hanging threads or small balls, are much worn again, and you can buy them by the yard to suit almost any dress.

The word has gone forth at last, and the Grovernor Gallery, once the head-quarters of "Greenery-gallery" aestheticism, is about to terminate its artistic existence.

EVERY one is very much struck with the diminution in size of the Prince of Wales since he went to Homburg. He was looking a much thinner and better at a recent wedding that it was a general subject of conversation.

The Duke and Duchess of Fife are to visit Norfolk, at Castle Rising Hall, until January, when they propose going to the milk of France for about three months.

The latest fashion in Paris is to pay a lady attention by ordering all her apartments to be bedecked with flowers sent by the friend who wishes to recall himself to her memory, in readiness for her return from a journey.

One reason that ladies' watches are usually not bad timekeepers is that they are so irregularly worn—hence have about three systems of seven a widely different environment.

The King of Holland's bodily health has improved without any favourable change in his mental condition. As he may live in this case for some time, the Ministers have at last induced Queen Emma to consent to the Regency she has always sought to avoid.

The living descendants of Queen Victoria number half a hundred. They include one son and daughter, grandsons and granddaughters, great grandsons and great granddaughters. Besides these she has four sons-in-law, four daughters-in-law, five grandsons-in-law, and one granddaughter-in-law.

LIEUT. WILHELM's young sons are going to be educated at the University of Cassel, and the beautiful Castle of Wilhelmshöhe is being done up and refurbished to receive the little boys with their tutors and suite. This castle was formerly the residence of the King of Westphalia (Jerome Bonaparte); it was also the prison of Napoleon III. during the Franco-German war.

The city of Kiew, the Rome of Russia, possesses the shoes or *plush* the sandals, we presume, of no less a personage than St. Joseph. These shoes, superlatively historical, are venerated and believed by the faithful to have been worn by St. Joseph when he and the Virgin Mary fled into Egypt.

The Duke of Norfolk is very pleased with the improvement which has recently shown itself in the health of his only son, the young Earl of Arundel. The improvement has been more lasting than others, and gives rise for greater hope as to ultimate recovery. The Earl is now eleven, and is the direct heir to the premier dukedom of England. The Duke is now staying at Arundel Castle with his son.

INSTEAD of wintering at Corfu, as was her original intention, it is very likely that the Empress of Austria will go to the West Indies in a few weeks, in which case she will probably cruise on the other side of the Atlantic during the greater part of next year. The Empress has conceived a wish to visit Cuba, Jamaica, and Mexico.

STATISTICS.

NEARLY ten per cent. of European flowers are scent-giving.

THERE are said to be thirteen thousand different kinds of postage stamps in the world.

THE force required to open an oyster appears to be 1,319½ times the weight of the shell-less creature.

RUSSIAN calculations of the population of China place it at 382,000,000, and the annual increase at 4,000,000.

THE great Parliament House clock is the largest in the world, and is usually called the Westminster clock. The dials are 22·2 feet in diameter. The depth of the well for the weights is 174 feet. The weight of the minute hand is two hundredweight, and the length 14 feet. The amount of glass used in the dials is 24 tons. The large bell can be heard 10 miles off; the small ones, four to five.

GEMS.

THE best thing is to do the present thing well.

HE is thy friend who speaks well of thee behind thy back.

THE pillow is a dumb slyL. To sleep upon a thing that is to be done is better than to be wakened up by one already done.

ALL confidence is dangerous unless it is complete; there are few circumstances in which it is not best, either to hide all, or to tell all.

HE who realises and upholds the hallowed character of love in all its forms will never slight it in its highest and holiest; and he who holds loosely the love of a friend or a brother is unworthy to take upon himself any obligation more sacred or binding.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

FEATHER CAKE.—One egg, one cup of sugar, one tablespoonful of butter, one half cup of milk, one and one-half cups of flour, one teaspoonful of cream of tartar, and one-half teaspoonful of soda.

SUPPER RELISH.—One and one-half pounds of the round of steak chopped fine; four crackers rolled fine, two eggs well beaten; butter the size of an egg; pepper and salt to taste. Mix all together, and bake in a slow oven a half-hour. To be eaten cold.

RICE GRIDDLE CAKES.—Cook the rice until perfectly soft, drain and mash with a spoon until the grains are well broken up. For each cup of rice take two eggs, one pint of milk, and one heaping teaspoonful of yeast powder in flour enough to make a thin batter.

SCALLOPED OYSTERS.—One quart of oysters, one pound of fine bread crumbs; butter a pudding dish, put in a layer of crumbs, and a layer of oysters, season each layer with salt, bits of butter, and a little red or white pepper; repeat till the oysters are all in, having a layer of crumbs at the top. Pour over the whole one egg beaten with one cup of milk. Bake forty minutes.

PIEAPPLE MOONDS.—Steam good tart apples; when tender rub through a colander and sweeten to taste. Soak two-thirds of a box of gelatine in enough water to cover it one hour, pour over it a cup and a half of boiling water; when well dissolved, strain and add a pint of the sifted apple and one-half cup of grated fresh or canned pineapple, or, if preferred, a half-cup of the juice of canned pineapple. Put into custard cups previously wet in cold water. When cold turn out into a pretty saucer, and serve with whipped cream or custard.

MISCELLANEOUS.

MARRIED persons are longer-lived than single people.

ALL unclaimed dead bodies found in France are cremated.

GREAT advances are being made in type-setting by machinery.

THOROUGHbred dogs are said to be less intelligent than mongrels.

A COLONEL may allow only ten per cent. of the men in his regiment to marry.

HANSON cabs have been a failure in Paris, and the horses and hansom have been sold.

OF the twenty-six braves who signed Magna Charta, all but three had to "make their mark," being unable to write.

STEREOTYPING was invented by William Ged, a Scotch goldsmith, who first designed the process in Edinburgh in 1786.

THE largest workshop in the world is that of Herr Krupp, the famous gun-maker. He employs over twenty thousand workmen.

IT is said that the character of a sleeping person is indicated by the lines that have been formed in his face by his habits of thinking.

WHEN it becomes possible to tell a friend he has done well without telling him how he might have done better, then watch for the millennium.

A FAMOUS firm is advertising "honest soap." This will no doubt lead to announcements of "conscientious mustard," and "strictly honourable cocoa."

A REVOLUTION in Europe is approaching. The waiters have formed a league or union which is to hold a congress demanding the suppression of the "tip." The garçons prefer a regular salary to the irregularity of the "tip."

A ROCKET-TELEPHONE that can be connected to the common electric bell wires of hotels, etc., and carried about in the pocket as a watch—to be used at convenience—is one of the latest novelties in Berlin.

LOVERS of cats will appreciate the compliment given to these animals by the late Canon Liddon. He said that the finer attributes of cats were many, but they were hidden by a coat of styness and pride.

IT does not do for Japanese newspapers to speak ill even of dead rulers, much less of the living. Several Japanese editors have been sentenced to four years' imprisonment with hard labour for speaking disrespectfully of the Emperor Jimmu, who, if he ever existed, lived about six hundred years ago.

HERE are a few old women's signs which may be read from a cup of tea. If anybody happens to have two spoons in his cup it is a sign that he will figure prominently at a wedding before the year is out. If milk or cream is put in your cup before the sugar it will "cross" your love. A tea stalk floating on the top of the tea is called a "stranger." When this happens to unmarried ladies they should stir the tea round briskly and then place the spoon in the centre of the cup, holding it quite still. If the "stranger" in its gyrations is attracted to the spoon, the stranger will come that evening; should it, however, cling to the side he will not come at all. We may observe that it really, depends on the state of the atmosphere as to whether the stalk goes to the middle or not. It is a sign of fair weather if the owners of small air bubbles, which usually rise after the sugar has been put in, collect themselves and remain in the centre of the cup. If, on the contrary, they struggle to the sides it is a sign that it will certainly rain in a few hours. This cluster of bubbles is also called a "kiss," and portends that the owner will be thus saluted during the course of the day. A cluster of tea leaves with a few stragglers at the front at the bottom of the cup signifies a bearse or a funeral, while a couple of stale leaves at the bottom, if close together, signify a wedding—and so on to the end of the chapter.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

DOLLY.—A deed of gift must be drawn by a lawyer.

LAMIE.—A person under the age of twenty-one cannot be sued for debt.

BARBETTE.—The name of "Beauchamp" is pronounced as if spelt "Be-cham."

ZILLAK.—The Duc d'Aumale is a son of the late King Louis Philippe.

KENWARD.—Mr. Bradlaugh has never voted for a Royal grant.

CROWLY.—All Staffordshire wills are proved in the Probate Registry at Lichfield.

CONSTANT READER.—If two strangers marry two sisters they do not become relations of each other.

STYLIA.—We do not answer questions as to raffias or other lotteries. They are illegal.

ANXIETY.—We do not know if a doctor can charge a double fee at the birth of twins.

BROKEN HEART.—If your husband is willing that you should return to him, and you are not willing to return, you can have no claim upon him.

A. T. S.—1. A distress must be levied between sunrise and sunset. 2. Furniture on the hire system cannot be seized for debts.

LOVEL.—1. 25, Southampton-buildings, W.C. 2. Five shillings is the registration fee, but application must be made either personally or by agent.

HOOK.—Hook, a light yellowish wine, is made at Hookheim (from which place it takes its name), on the River Main, in Germany. It is either still or sparkling.

RODERICK.—1. Commander Nares went within 400 miles of the North Pole. 2. No granivorous animals seen a long way below that limit.

ANXIOUS ONE.—A father is liable for the maintenance of a daughter so long as she is unable to earn her own living.

DORIS.—If your parents become chargeable to the parish, you must pay such sum as the guardians or the magistrates may adjudge.

G. D. T.—No. Water will remain at same temperature no matter how long it boils—that is, at normal or sea level; take it to a mountain top, and, though it still boils, the temperature will be less.

IN WANT OF ADVICE.—Obviously he must take what he can get to do, and as many are in that position in the colonies, we think he is just throwing away money in emigrating.

HAIR.—Dublin time is about twenty minutes behind Glasgow and Edinburgh time, because Scotland is so much nearer the east than Ireland, therefore gets the sun so much earlier.

D. A. S.—At the death of your sister without a will, all that she possesses, after payment of her debts, will fall to be divided in equal shares to her surviving brothers, none having a preference.

STEVES.—Saint Stephen was the first martyr of the Christian Church. The Jews charged him with speaking against the law and the temple, against Moses, and against God, and, by order of the Sanhedrim, he was stoned. See Acts, chapters 6 and 7.

FAITH.—Your letter is creditable both to your head and to your heart. We predict that you will grow into a useful, highly-esteemed woman, and that you will rely, by your good advice, save many from deaths more terrible than are met with in a burning building.

CURIOUSITY.—"Pigeon-breast" may either indicate spinal weakness or spinal strength. In the latter case it is the result of practising erect carriage of the body, and is a notable characteristic of soldiers and others who have been subjected, or who subject themselves, to daily drill.

REFUSE.—We never recommend investments, but we may recall the Duke of Wellington's observation for your benefit—"Increase of interest means decrease of security." If the investment were an inviting one there would be no need to offer big interest to attract money to it.

SIDIER ROY.—The phrase *sidier roy*, or red soldier, was the name given to the regular regiments in Scotland to distinguish them from the independent companies raised to protect the peace of the Highlands, which were called the *sidier dhu*, or black soldiers. The 42nd Regiment, which was formed out of these companies, is still known as the "Black Watch."

B. S.—The Bundesrath represents the individual States of Germany, and the Reichstag the German nation. The members of the Bundesrath, 59 in number, are appointed by the government of the individual States for each session; those of the Reichstag, 397 in number, are elected by universal suffrage and the ballot for the term of three years. The States are represented in both bodies proportionately to their population.

WORKED ONE.—It is certain that the removal, stopping, and cleansing of the teeth by a daily brushing with camphorated chalk will do a good deal towards purifying the breath, but we imagine the offensiveness is owing to some extent to dyspepsia or indigestion, which must be cured by rearrangement and regulation of diet and strict attention to the stomach. A carbolic mouth wash offers the handiest means of obtaining temporary relief, and a drop or two of Condy's fluid taken in water will serve the same purpose. Do not use both carbolic and Condy, however.

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WILLOW WARE.

On grandmamma's table is waiting for me
A plate with gingerbread piled,
Bread and milk, and berries and cream,
And the mug marked "For a good child."
And I eat my supper and wonder where
That wonderful land may be.
Where the sky is white and the earth is blue,
That on my plate I see.

"Grandma, you know 'most everything—
Tell the story of it all;
Do the long-tailed birds know how to sing?
Did a princess live in that castle small?
The princess' hair in a fairy tale
Is generally gold, but this is blue.
How does the boat go without any sail?
Tell me the story, grandmamma, do."

So she tells me the legend, centuries old,
Of the mandarin, rich in lands and gold;
Of Li-chi fair and Chang the good,
Who loved each other as lovers should;
How they hid in the gardener's hut awhile,
Then fled away to the Beautiful Isle;
Though the cruel father pursued them there,
And would have killed the hapless pair;
But a kindly Power, by pity stirred,
Changed each into a beautiful bird.

Grandmamma puts her spectacles on,
And shows me on the plate
The mandarin's house, the island home,
The boat, the bridge, the gate.
"Here is the orange tree where they talked—
Here they are running away—
And over all at the top you see
The birds making love away."

And the odd little figures seem to live—
Strange fancies fill my head,
Till grandmamma tells me, much too soon,
It's time to go to bed.

But I dream of a land all blue and white,
I see the lovers take their flight;
Over the arching bridge they go—
One of the lover birds flies below—
From the little house with the turned-up edges
Come tiny lords and ladies and pages;
And the bedpost turns to a willow tree,
And at last I seem myself to be
An assure lassie wandering through
That beautiful queer little land of blue.

INQUIRER.—The "West of America," reckoning from the British geographical position, includes practically the whole of the manufacturing districts. Duluth is a flourishing town. If you have friends there who can put you in the way of getting a situation, you need not hesitate to go out. You may get to St. John's, Newfoundland, by Allan Line from Glasgow, for about £4 10s. Reach there in ten days. It is in British North America, or Canadian Dominion, and is considerably colder than Scotland.

CLAUDIA.—No one can decide for you in a comparison between Burns and Scott, because no two persons will agree regarding what is true greatness. We should say Scott was the man of greatest mind, and Burns the man of greatest heart. Scott appeals to the feelings by his stirring songs and tender lays, running the whole gamut of human experience from heroic outburst to love-sick plaint, every aspiration which his country men or women have experienced finds expression in his poems, and he kindles enthusiasm where Scott, immeasurably his superior as a literary man, awakens only admiration.

ONE IN DISTRESS.—Interment in any cemetery is permitted only under special conditions insisted upon by the authorities. You will find you have signed a document binding you to put up the headstone, and that you must therefore do it.

SATURN.—The reign of Saturn, an ancient mythical king or deity of Italy, was called the golden age of that country, to which, in consequence, the name of Saturnia was given. The same name was also given to June, as being the daughter of Saturn.

FAITH.—An old superstition has it that every month of the year is under the influence of a particular gem. Thus the garnet, which signifies constancy and truth, is assigned to January, the amethyst (sincerity) to February, the bloodstone (courage and presence of mind) to March, the diamond (innocence) to April, the emerald (success in love) to May, the agate (health and long life) to June, the cornelian (content) to July, the onyx (conjugal bliss) to August, the chrysope (a charm against insanity) to September, the opal (hope) to October, the topaz (fidelity) to November, and the turquoise (prosperity) to December.

TROUBLED ONE.—You must keep at work trying to inspire your son with a love of truth. It may be that you made truth and goodness repulsive to him by dosing him with asceticism under the name of truth. Or, perhaps, you have been so solicitous, and have acted so unwisely in the matter as to have "cornered" him, or argued him first into prevarication, and from that into falsehood. Some parents have a most pernicious way of browbeating a child, and of doubting its statements, and of exclaiming, "Come, now, tell the truth; none of your lying to me," and suchlike insulting outbursts on the helplessness of childhood.

EFFIE.—There are said to be over 50,000 "King's Daughters" in the United States. This charitable organisation was formed in this city on January 15, 1889. The motto chosen by the members is—

"Look up and not down,
Look forward and not back,
Look out and not in,
Lend a hand."

LUCA.—Falling out of the hair is frequently the result of the weakness of the nervous power. Shaving the scalp is sometimes beneficial, if it is followed by dry friction, tonic lotions, and a stimulating diet. Another course which sometimes stops the falling out is to plunge the head into cold water every morning and at night, and, after the hair is thoroughly dried, to brush it briskly until the scalp is glowing.

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